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CANDID REFLECTIONS

CONCERNING

THE DOCTRINE OF THE

T R I N I T Y;

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

~~The Reader is desired to correct the following—~~

~~E R R A T A:~~

~~p. 10 l. 13. r. above 100 years.~~

~~p. 19. l. 12. add after the word efforts; and nothing was of so great
consequence as the harmony of those, who were assembled to oppose his
sides.~~

~~p. 20 note l. 9. s. nihilominus~~



CANDID REFLECTIONS
 O N
 THE DIFFERENT MANNER
 IN WHICH
 MANY OF THE LEARNED AND PIOUS
 HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCEPTIONS
 CONCERNING
 THE DOCTRINE OF THE
 T R I N I T Y;
 IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY BENJAMIN FAWCETT, M. A.

Si ulla pars est theologiæ, in qua facile est aut errare aut accusari, est illa de trinitate.

GROTIUS.

Many good men were engaged on both sides of the controversy; so it was in the fourth century, and so it hath been ever since.

DR. JORTIN.

Considering the excellent characters of many of those, whose opinions were most widely different, we may assure ourselves that many things asserted on the one side and on the other relating to the Trinity, are not fundamental in religion.

DR. DODDRIDGE.

Which things [viz. the deep things of God] we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. I COR. ii. 13.

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THE DIFFERENT MANNER

NO. 7-11-10

WANT OF THE LEARNED AND PIOUS

IN A LETTER TO KENNEDY





CANDID REFLECTIONS, &c.

DEAR SIR,

W HATEVER may have led your thoughts to some enquiries, to you indeed of an unusual nature, and in which you are desirous to obtain farther satisfaction, you may be confident of having all the assistance in my power, and therefore will excuse this letter, if it should rather exceed in length.

I will not so much endeavour to state and determine what is *scriptural* in the doctrine of the trinity, with respect to sentiment or language, as what is merely *human*. While the doctrine itself is allowed by all to be peculiar to revelation, and in its own nature very difficult and mysterious, many unscriptural niceties and distinctions have been made use of by the pious and learned in expressing their conceptions of it. What those various and contradictory modes of expression are, and what their tendency hath been, are things well-known to persons of much reading; and it is a circumstance on many accounts very desirable, that others should not be wholly

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un-

unacquainted with them; especially as such knowledge may lead to moderation and candour, and thereby more effectually promote the cause of truth and piety. Indeed, on such a subject, the more clearly we distinguish what is of God, and what of man, the more salutary will our knowledge be. In order to this, I beg leave, Sir, to present to your view the sentiments and expressions of the principal ancient and modern writers, as they are, in a great measure, collected together in Dr. *Doddridge's Theological Lectures*, 4to. pages 379—404. There the leading design of *this letter* is stated with peculiar advantage. And though that book is more immediately calculated for the use of students in divinity, yet its numerous subjects of enquiry are rendered so intelligible, even by its mathematical form of compilation, that I earnestly recommend the whole of it to your attentive perusal. Nor is this the mere result of my esteem for the method, in which my juvenile studies were conducted, or for the name of *Doddridge*, though it is a name that will be ever dear to me, as long as gratitude can influence, or the powers of recollection shall remain. If it may in the least contribute, Sir, to your satisfaction, the extracts from the Dr's. book, which occur in *this letter*, shall be distinguished by single inverted commas. As for the more explicit and more numerous quotations from other books, which you will here meet with, I should be very unable to apologize for them,

them, if the design I am professedly pursuing, did not render most of them necessary, and I presume all of them useful.

An historical sketch of the Trinitarian controversy.

The first notice is due, on every account, to the most early christian writers, particularly those called *apostolic fathers*, and more especially *Clement*, who is so honourably mentioned by St. *Paul*. (*Phil.* iv. 3.) They appear never to have used any controversial term or phrase upon this subject; no, not so much as the word *Trinity* itself, which, with many others, was the sole invention of their successors. Their minds were little disposed to such a controversy, as long as divine providence employed them in the infinitely more important cares of planting and watering infant-churches, and of preparing themselves and their converts for the most tremendous storms of persecution and oppression. Such was their artless simplicity, that ‘not a few of their expressions concerning this doctrine would have been condemned as *heretical*,’ if they had lived till worldly prosperity too apparently cherished in their successors a disposition to endless and unprofitable strife about words. It was their excellence and happiness to be destitute of those refinements and inventions of after-ages, which, however adorned with scholastic and pompous modes of expression, are in reality nothing more than unmeaning sounds and solemn trifling.

trifling, but have been productive of the most pernicious consequences. It was a glorious simplicity, either to satisfy themselves with the very words, with which the Holy Spirit hath clothed divine truth, or to allow one another the liberty of interpreting scripture in their own words.^a

Though this deviation from the excellent spirit and temper of the *apostolic fathers*, and from the simplicity of their writings, was not so apparent during the second century, yet soon after it became very distinguishing. It was most of all exemplified in the writers a little before and after the time of the first general council, held at *Nice*, a city of *Bithynia*, in the year of our Lord 325, at which were present 318 bishops. ‘ They generally spoke of the Son of God, as ‘ having had a glorious nature pre-existent to his ‘ incarnation. They represented him,’ not, with the modern *Athanasians*, as independent upon, but ‘ as derived from the Father, and nevertheless so partaking of the Father’s nature as to ‘ be called *God of God, light of light*, and they ‘ commonly illustrate this by the simile of one ‘ taper being kindled by another, and of rays ‘ proceeding from the sun.’^b This they explained

^a An english translation of those writers may be seen in Archbishop *Wake’s Apostolic Fathers*. — A new translation of the *Letter of Clement* was lately published in *Scotland*.

^b *Bull Defens. Fid. Nic.* § 4. Cap. i. p. 222---227. Edit. Lond. 1721.

Wilton’s Review of the Articles. page 70---75.

‘plained by a greek word [*ομοουσιος*] declaring their view of Jesus Christ, as of the *same* substance with the Father.’ “By this word, they meant, says Dr. *Jortin*, not of the same numerical, or individual substance or subsistence, but of the same generical substance or subsistence. As among men, a son is *ομοουσιος* with his father, that is, of the same human nature; so, in their opinion, the Son of God is *ομοουσιος* with the Father, that is, of the same divine nature.”^c

‘And they reckoned it *heretical* to say, that Christ was [*ομοιοουσιος*] of *like* substance with, or only a resemblance of the Father.’ “By this word, they meant, says Dr. *Jortin*, that Christ was of like substance, or like to his Father in all things.”^d But considering how the apostle represents the Son, as *the express image of the person of God*, (*Heb. i. 3.*) it seems very natural to explain that passage of scripture as meaning, at least, that Christ is like to, or resembles his Father. Why then should they censure, with so much severity, what was a near approach to the apostle’s language, and might probably be the very same sentiment?

Some of them as strenuously insisted on the necessity of distinguishing between [*ουσια*] *substance*, and [*υποστασις*] *subsistence*; whilst others of them exploded the distinction with the utmost

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violence.

^c *Jortin's Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* Vol. ii. page 212.

^d *Ibidem*, page 207.

violence. We are therefore told, that at the close of the *nicene creed* was “an anathema pronounced upon such as should say, That Christ “was of another *substance* or *subsistence*.”^e That was plainly using the words as synonymous. Even *Athanasius* himself positively asserts, “That “*subsistence* is the same with *substance*, and hath “no other signification.”^f Such an express testimony of *Athanasius* is so directly contrary to the language of that which is commonly styled his *creed*, as in a remarkable manner concurs with other facts to prove, that the *creed* itself was drawn up by an author, who lived ^{above} 100 years after *Athanasius*.

Whoever amongst the *nicene fathers* were the authors of and advocates for this distinction between *substance* and *subsistence*, they applied the *first* of these words to the Deity in general, and the *latter* to each of the Three Persons in particular, so as to make *subsistence* and *person* to be synonymous terms. By this distinction they considered themselves as expressing a most important difference of ideas. And, in conformity to them, the same use of these words, in connection with the same ideas, have been retained in a variety of *creeds* and *catechisms*.—The *creed* so commonly but improperly ascribed to *Athanasius*,
speaks

^e Η ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἡ οὐσίας φασκόντας εἶναι—τούτους ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία. Socrat. Eccles. Hist. L. i. C. 8. p. 25. Edit. Vales. Mog. 1677.

^f Η δὲ ὑπόστασις οὐσία ἐστὶ καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο σημαίνοντιν ἔχει. *Athanasii Opera*. Tom. i. p. 934.

speaks of “neither confounding the person, nor
 “dividing the substance.”—The first of the 39
Articles of the Church of England says, “In
 “unity of this Godhead there be three persons,
 “but one substance.”—The *Assembly of Divines*
at Westminster in their *Confession of Faith* say,
 “In the unity of the Godhead there be three
 “persons of one substance.”—And in their
larger and shorter catechisms they teach, “That
 “there be three persons in the Godhead, the
 “Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and
 “these three are one God, the same in sub-
 “stance.”

It may well be asked, why were such techni-
 cal phrases, such terms of art, invented for so
 important a purpose? Why was such peculiar
 stress laid upon them, both in *confessions of faith*,
 and in *catechisms* for the use of children? Are
 they peculiarly fit to make the distinction in-
 tended by them? To these enquiries may be
 given the following answers:

Some of the ancient philosophers seem to
 have meant by the term, ουσια, any universal or
 general nature, from which the individuals, sup-
 posed to partake of it, derive their denomina-
 tion, and by which they are distinguished from
 other classes of beings; and by the term, υποστασις,
 any particular being existing in that universal
 nature.*—But if, with metaphysicians and gram-

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marians,

* Ουσια εστιν ονομα κοινον, και αοριστον, επι παντων των υπ'
 αυτης υποστασεων ομοτιμως φερομενον και συνωνυμως καταγορευο-
 μενον. Suidas apud Suicer. Thes. Eccl. in voc. ουσια.

marians, we compare the words, [ουσια and υποστασις] *substance* and *subsistence*, it will be often found that there is no such distinction made between them.^h

In the passage just quoted from so accurate a writer as Dr. *Jortin*, they are mentioned as perfectly synonymous. And says Dr. *Wilton*, after having carefully examined the ground of this distinction, “ Their literal sense, as applied to “ the same subject, will always be the same.”ⁱ But because the *latin tongue* had no word that answered so well to υποστασις as substantia, therefore the intemperate zeal of those *nicene fathers*, who distinguished between *substance* and *subsistence*, occasioned a long and violent contest between the *greek* and *latin churches*.^k — As for scripture, there is not the least trace in the whole
greek

Ομοουσιον a probatis scriptoribus id dicitur quod ejusdem cum altero substantiæ, essentiæ, sive naturæ est; v. g. Porphyr. ομοουσιοι αι των ζων ψυχαι ημετεραις. Aristot. ομοουσια δε παντα ατρα. *Bull Defens. Fid. Nic.* § 2. Cap. i. p. 25. Edit. Lond. 1721. Concil. Chalcedon. ομολογουμεν υιον ομοουσιον ημιν κατα την αθεωροτητα. Evagr. Hist. Eccles. L. ii. Cap. 4. p. 294. Ed. Mogunt. 1679.

^h Ουσια εστι το εν εαυτω ον, και μη εν ατερω εχον την υπαρξιν, ως το συμβεβηκος. Suidas iterum in Suiceri loco supra citato.

Υποστασις εστιν ουσια μετα των ιδιωματων αριθμων των ομοειδων διαφερουσα. Vid. Jackson Annot. in Novat. p. 365 et p. 362.

ⁱ *Wilton's Review of the Articles.* page 85—87.

^k *Spanheim Eccles. Hist.* § 4. Col. 910. Qp. Vol. i. Edit. Lug. 1701. Also Reply to Dr. Waterland, printed by Knapton, 1722. p. 454, 455.

greek testament of having [*ουσια*] *substance* applied to the Deity. So that if this only rightful and infallible judge in all religious controversies be allowed to determine the question, *substance* and *subsistence* is a distinction without a difference. There are but two instances of *ουσια* in the greek testament, and both of them are only to express the share of *worldly substance*, which the prodigal son is represented as demanding of his father, *Luke xv. 12, 13.* Even *υποστασις* is only once applied to a divine subsistence or *person*, *Heb. i. 3.* Once it is put for the subsistence or *substance of things hoped for*, *Heb. xi. 1.* Thrice it is used for confidence; viz. for a *confident boasting*, *2 Cor. ix. 4.* and *xi. 17.* and for the *confidence of faith*, *Heb. iii. 14.* Besides these five instances, *υποστασις* is no where else made use of in the greek testament.

“ Here, says *Calvin*, we should philosophize
 “ with great sobriety and moderation. As this
 “ is one of the deepest mysteries of revelation,
 “ we should be very careful, neither in senti-
 “ ment nor in expression, to go beyond the
 “ bounds prescribed to us in the word of God.
 “ For how should the mind of man compre-
 “ hend within its narrow limits the immense
 “ essence of God, when it hath never yet been
 “ able to determine, what the materials are
 “ which compose the body of the sun, though
 “ daily visible to the naked eye? Or, how
 “ should its penetration, without a divine guide,
 “ reach to the *substance* of God, while it remains
 “ so

“ so entirely in the dark concerning its own substance? It well becomes us, therefore, to resign up to God the exact knowledge of himself.”¹

The more wise and moderate members of the council of *Nice* gave it as their opinion, says Dr. *Cave*, “ That no innovation should be made in matters of faith; but that it should be still entertained with the same naked simplicity, wherewith, from the beginning it had been delivered to the church; men of simple and honest minds not thinking it fit, that articles concerning God should be made the subject of subtle and over curious disputes.”^m Alas! This prudent advice was over-ruled, says Dr. *Wilton*, by some other members of the council, and principally through the influence of *Athanasius*, whose own private ends (cloaked under the specious disguise of a zeal for the truth) would have been effectually frustrated, “ if

¹ Equidem hic, siquando alias in reconditis scripturæ mysteriis, sobrie multaque cum moderatione philosophandum; adhibita etiam multa cautione, ne aut cogitatio aut lingua ultra procedat quam verbi Dei fines se protendunt. Quomodo enim immensam Dei essentiam ad suam modulam mens humana definiat, quæ nondum statuere certo potuit, quale sit solis corpus, quod tamen oculis quotidie conspicitur? Imo vero, quomodo proprio ductu ad Dei usque substantiam excutiendam penetret, quæ suam ipsius minime assequitur? Quare Deo libenter permittamus sui cognitionem. *Calvini Instit. Lib. i. Cap. 13. § 21. p. 40. Edit. Lug. Batav. 1654.*

^m *Cave's Life of Athanasius. § 3.*

“ if the scriptural phrases had been determined
 “ to be preferable to the words of men’s inven-
 “ tion.”ⁿ

It appears by the most authentic testimonies of antiquity, that, amongst the *nicene fathers*, no one’s moral character was so exceptionable as that of *Athanasius*. “ He was condemned, says “ Dr. *Jortin*, by a council held at *Tyre*, for “ having obtained the see of *Alexandria* by unjustifiable methods, and for other and worse “ misdemeanors, if *Philostorgius* may be credited. This historian, though a favourer of the “ *Arian* cause, yet freely censures *Arius*, where “ he thought him reprehensible, and therefore “ might be a fair relator of other points.”^o Bp. *Clayton* and Dr. *Wilton* are yet more explicit in observing, “ how *Athanasius* treated all the “ rest of mankind, and even his own royal “ master, *Constantine* the Great, with the utmost “ insolence, having paid a servile court to the “ Papal Chair. Infomuch that in the books “ of the Canon Law, the first precedent that is, “ or can be produced in support of the Papal “ Supremacy, is this instance of the servile sub- “ jection that was paid by *Athanasius* to Pope “ *Julius*.” This, no doubt, atoned with the Court of *Rome* for his many flagrant immoralities, and after his death merited a canonization. And says Mr. *Robinson* of *Cambridge*, “ We “ give

ⁿ *Wilton’s Review of the Articles.* page 71.

^o *Jortin’s Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* Vol. ii. page 197.

“ give up St. *Athanasius*. He was, we think, “ no saint, but an enormous sinner.”^p Such strictures on so distinguished a person are thought by some to be altogether invidious, and to have nothing to do with the doctrine of the Trinity ; while others have judged it of no little importance, both to historical and theological truth, thus to lay open the sources, from whence the church of Christ hath derived, for so many centuries, a considerable part of its infelicity and dishonour.

‘ Those also were condemned as *heretical* by ‘ the *nicene* council, who, either on the one ‘ hand, maintained there was but one nature ; ‘ or, on the other, that there were two persons ‘ in Christ. Under the same *heretical* censure ‘ they included those, who asserted the Son to ‘ have been produced by creation, or to be in ‘ the number of creatures. They ran into several other subtleties of expression, by which ‘ they seemed to study, rather to conceal, than ‘ to explain their sentiments.’ And amidst the obscurity of their manner of treating the subject, ‘ they grew so warm, as to anathematize, oppose, and even murder each other, on account ‘ of some or other of their unscriptural phrases.’ It is not therefore to be wondered at, that such

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^p Bp. Clayton’s *Essay on Spirit*, § 133, 141, 142. page 135, &c. — And his *Speech in the House of Lords in Ireland*, Feb. 2, 1756. — *Wilton’s Review of the Articles*, page 79—81. — *Robinson’s Plea for the Divinity of Christ*. 1st. Edit.

a conduct should bring, as it did, a lasting reproach upon their common christianity, both among *Jews* and *Pagans*.¹ Indeed their best friends saw in them so much to blame, that the Emperor *Constantine* himself, in an epistle in part recited by *Socrates*, the historian, directed to *Alexander*, the orthodox patriarch of *Alexandria*, and his presbyter *Arius*, freely tells them, “The
“ controversy between you hath no reference to
“ any of the great duties enjoined by scripture,
“ nor to any new appointment in the worship
“ of God. As you appear to be of one and
“ the same sentiment, there is not the least shadow of a plea for interrupting communion
“ with each other. What, therefore, can be
“ more unreasonable, indecent, or impious, than
“ your contending with such obstinacy and
“ acrimony of temper, about a matter of the
“ most trifling nature,” [their different way of expressing themselves concerning the divinity of Christ,] “at the same time that such multitudes
“ of the people of God are under your direction and determination in their most important concerns?”¹ Though *Arius* afterward
more

¹ *Chandler's Hist. of Persecution*, page 39, &c.

¹ Ουδε γαρ υπερ του κορυφαιου τω εν τω νομω παραγγελματων υμιν εξηφθη προφασις, ουδε καινη τις υμιν υπερ της του Θεου θεησκειας αιρεσις αντιστηχθη. Αλλ' ενα και τοι αυτον εχετε λογισμον, ωςπερ το της κοινωνιας συνθημα. [ως προς το της κοινωνιας συνθημα δυνασθαι συνελθειν, secundum Eusebium.] Τμων γαρ εν αλληλοις υπερ μικρων και λιαν ελαχιστων φιλονεικουστων,

more severely felt the Emperor's displeasure, on account of his opinions, yet he was again restored to the royal favour, upon presenting a confession of his faith, in which he approached very nigh to the language of the *nicene creed*. For says Dr. *Wilton*, " If I was an *Arian*, in judgment, I should have no objection to the phraseology of this creed." *Mosheim* tells us, " That *Arius* was invited to *Constantinople* by the emperor *Constantine*, in order to greater preferment, and died there in a very dismal manner, in the year 336."—The translator of *Mosheim* adds in a note the following words. " After having examined this matter with the utmost care, it appears to me extremely probable, that this unhappy man was a victim to the resentment of his enemies, and was destroyed by poison, or some other violent method. A blind and fanatical zeal for certain systems of faith hath, in all ages, produced such horrible acts of cruelty and injustice."

When *Calvin* is taking notice of the various causes, which concurred in their operation for deprava-

φιλονηκουτων, τοσούτον τον του Θεου λαον ταις υμετεραις ιδεσθαι φρεσιν ου προσηκει δια το διχονοειν: αλλ' ουτε περπον, ουτε ολως θεμιτον ειναί πιγιυται. *Socrat. Hist. Eccles. Lib. i. Cap. 7. p. 16. Ed. Mogunt. 1677. Vid. etiam, Euseb. de Vita Constantini Mag. Lib. ii. Cap. 64—73. p. 473—478. Ed. Mogunt. 1677. Ubi hæc Epistola exstat integra.*

* *Wilton's Review of the Articles. page 72--75.*

* *Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Vol. i. page 340. 8vo.*

depraving the most pure of the general councils, he last of all mentions " Their falling out amongst themselves." He then adds these remarkable words. " We have an illustrious display of the influence of the last mentioned and most fatal cause, in the council of *Nice*, which in point of dignity is deservedly held in the highest esteem. While the principal article of our faith was there in a perilous situation, and *Arius*, the enemy with whom the conflict was to be maintained, was present, in readiness to exert all his hostile efforts; X they nevertheless, inattentive to these alarming dangers, like persons, who had even lost the sense of gravity, modesty, and all humanity, neglected the contest, which they had before them, and, as if they had come thither with a fixed design to gratify *Arius*, began to tear each other to pieces with intestine discords; pointing the arrow, which ought to have been aimed at *Arius*, against themselves, loudly charging each other with atrocious crimes, and letting fly abroad their defamatory libels. Never would their contentions have ended, till they had pierced each other thro' with the wounds which they mutually gave, unless the emperor *Constantine* had interposed: who professing that an examination into their lives was a matter above his knowledge, corrected their intemperate heat by commendation, rather than by rebuke. How unlikely is it, that any succeeding councils

Add after the word efforts ;

"and nothing was of so great consequence, as the harmony of those, who were assembled to oppose his error: —

“ cils should be less culpable! Indeed, this is
 “ a circumstance that little needs illustration.
 “ Let any one peruse their transactions, and to
 “ speak in the softest terms, he must bear wit-
 “ nefs, to their numerous mistakes.”^u

In this manner was *Calvin* obliged, by the fullest evidence of ecclesiastical history, to censure the most celebrated councils, and particularly that of *Nice*. With how much greater freedom would he have animadverted upon them, had he himself, and the age in which he lived,

^u Vel quodd nimis affectu nonnunquam præcípites ferebantur. Hujus postremi (quod omnium durissimum videtur) exemplum illustre extitit in Nicæna synodo: cujus dignitas omnium consensu summa veneratione, ut merebatur, excepta est. Nam quum primarium fidei nostræ caput illic periclitaretur, adesset hostis Arius in procinctu, quocum manus conferendæ essent, summum verò momentum in eorum concordia esset qui ad oppugnandum Arii errorem parati venerant: ipsi nihilominus tantorum discriminum securi, imò velut gravitatis, modestiæ, et omnis humanitatis obliti, omisso quod in manibus erat certamine (quasi ex destinato, Ario gratificaturi, eo concessissent) intestinis dissidiis sese proscindere cæperunt: et stylum, qui in Arium stringendus erat, in seipsos dirigere. Fædæ criminationes audiebantur: libelli accusatorii volitabant: nec contentionum finis ullus factus esset, donec mutuis vulneribus se confodissent, nisi Imperator Constantinus occurrisset, qui inquisitionem in eorum vitam, rem esse supra suam cognitionem professus, talem intemperiem laude magis quàm objurgatione castigavit. Quàm multis partibus et alia quæ deinde sequuta sunt Concilia lapsa fuisse verissimile est? Nec longa demonstratione opus hæc res habet: si quis enim acta perlegat, multas illic infirmitates animadvertet: nequid dicam gravius. *Calvini Instit.* Lib. iv. Cap. ix. § 10. p. 418. Edit. Lug. Bat. 1654.

lived, entertained just views of the nature and extent of *christian liberty*, and the *right of private judgment*: in that case, his excellent pen would undoubtedly have transmitted to posterity such animadversions, as we meet with in the great writers of happier and more enlightened times.

Dr. *Owen*, after making some very just observations on the primitive method of defending the truth, and maintaining both its sufficiency and superiority in point of efficacy to every other method, takes notice of the change which happened in consequence of introducing the authoritative determinations of general councils. “ This way, says he, was begun in
 “ the council of *Nice*, wherein although there
 “ was a determination of the doctrine concern-
 “ ing the person of Christ then in agitation,
 “ and opposed, as unto his divine nature there-
 “ in, according unto the truth, yet sundry
 “ evils and inconveniencies ensued thereon.
 “ For thenceforth the faith of christians began
 “ greatly to be resolved into the authority of
 “ men, and as much, if not more weight to
 “ be laid on what was decreed by the fathers
 “ there assembled, than on what was clearly
 “ taught in the scriptures. Besides, being
 “ necessitated *as they thought*, to explain their
 “ conceptions of the divine nature of Christ,
 “ in words either not used in the scripture, or
 “ whose signification unto that purpose was
 “ not determined therein, occasion was given
 C “ unto

“ unto endless contentions about them.—And
 “ there were yet farther evils that ensued
 “ hereon. For the curious and serpentine wits
 “ of men, finding themselves by this means
 “ set at liberty to think and discourse of those
 “ mysteries of the blessed Trinity and the
 “ person of Christ, without much regard unto
 “ plain divine testimonies, in such ways where-
 “ in cunning and sophistry did much bear
 “ away, began to multiply such new, curious
 “ and false notions about them, especially
 “ about the latter, as caused new disturbances,
 “ and those of large extent and long continu-
 “ ance.” The Doctor had a little before in-
 stanced in the difference which fell out, first,
 between the *greek* churches themselves, and af-
 terwards between the *greek* and *latin* churches.”

Mr. *Benjamin Bennet* asks, “ What did the
 “ *Nicene fathers* perform ? ” and answers,
 “ only two things. First, they gave an in-
 “ stance of this great truth, that learned men
 “ are never more weak, trifling and passionate,
 “ than when they meet together in councils
 “ and synods. — Secondly, they left matter of
 “ conviction to posterity, which long experi-
 “ ence hath abundantly confirmed, that God
 “ never designed such assemblies to be the
 “ instruments and means of preserving truth
 “ and peace in the church. — The *matter* of
 “ their decisions was far from serving the
 “ cause,

" cause, either of truth or peace. The dis-
 " tinction of *homoousians* and *homoiousians*, was
 " owing to the labours of this council, with
 " the animosities, schisms, heresies consequent
 " thereupon. Their inserting arbitrarily, in a
 " sublime article of faith, about which we can
 " know nothing more than God hath told us,
 " a term of their own devising, and making it
 " essential and necessary in this article, was
 " exceeding presumptuous, and indeed pre-
 " pared the doctrine to be a bone of conten-
 " tion, and an occasion of lasting strife.—
 " Nor had the *manner* of their proceedings, in
 " the business before them, any better ten-
 " dency. Surely they should have reasoned
 " against error, and banished it out of the
 " church by arguments, rather than votes.
 " Otherwise truth is set upon a wrong founda-
 " tion, and is rendered the most precarious,
 " fluctuating, uncertain thing in the world; is
 " on this side or that, just as an accidental
 " majority shall incline.—It was here the un-
 " happy *subscribing* trade had its chief sanc-
 " tion; which henceforth became the great
 " means of proving and defending the faith.
 " It was here that the invidious, uncharitable,
 " and indeed senseless distinction of *orthodox*
 " and *erroneous*, was coined, or however made
 " current. A distinction, that directly tends
 " to suppress the truth, but hath never pro-
 " moted it, unless by accident; and hath
 " proved a woeful engine of pride, tyranny

“ and persecution; hath made some apostates,
 “ some hypocrites, and crushed a multitude of
 “ upright men, who have often found them-
 “ selves reduced to this dilemma, *That if they*
 “ *would be orthodox, they could not be honest;*
 “ *and if they were not orthodox, they must starve.*
 “ And how absurd is the distinction itself? As
 “ *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth*
 “ *good and sinneth not,* so neither an orthodox
 “ man, who believeth aright, and erreth not.—
 “ It was from this council chiefly, that the art
 “ of *heretick-making* took its rise;—till heresy
 “ became a mere jest, an ecclesiastical scare-
 “ crow, formed and declared by the church’s
 “ arbitrary fiat.—And thus they went on, de-
 “ fending the faith with authority and terror,
 “ till there was scarce an honest man left, that
 “ durst peep into his bible, and profess *the*
 “ *truth as it is in Jesus.*” *

‘ Most of the oldest *post-nicene fathers* car-
 ‘ ried their notion of the distinct personality
 ‘ and supreme divinity to a very great height;
 ‘ and seemed to have imagined they sufficiently
 ‘ supported the unity of the God-head by as-
 ‘ serting, that Father, Son, and Spirit had each
 ‘ of them the same *divine* nature, as three or
 ‘ more *men* have each of them the same human
 ‘ nature.’

The several partizans in so unhappy a con-
 test may be ranked under the following lead-
 ers;

* *Bennet’s Irenicum, or Review of the Controversies about*
the Trinity, &c. page 43—46.

ers; with whom it will be no impropriety to connect a list of *English* divines, who are of the greatest eminence for their writings on this subject, and by which the affinity between the sentiments and expressions of *ancients* and *moderns* may more easily be traced.

Sabellius, an *African* Bishop in the third century, 'taught, that the Father, Son, and Spirit were only the names and offices of the same person, who was in heaven called the Father, on earth the Son, and, as exerting his power on the creation, the Holy Spirit.'

Arius, a Presbyter of *Alexandria* in the fourth century, 'held Christ to be only the first and most glorious creature of God, denying he had any thing that could properly be called a divine nature, any otherwise than as any thing very excellent may, by a figure, be called divine; or as his delegated dominion over the system of nature, might entitle him to the name of God. He seems also to have thought, that the Spirit was another distinct inferior being, created by the Son, but he did not employ himself much in this part of the controversy. His sentiments most largely prevailed, and in some places and times seem to have almost entirely swallowed up those of *Athanasius*.'

Photinus, Bishop of *Sirmium* in the fourth century, 'like some others before him, seems to have asserted, that Christ was a mere man, and had no existence before his incarnation.'

Macedonius, Bishop of *Constantinople* in the fourth century, 'denied the Holy Spirit to have any proper divine substance, and represented him only as a created power, which was diffused over all other creatures.'

Athanasius, Patriarch of *Alexandria* in the fourth century, "so asserted the derivation of the Son of God from the Father, that the expressions he makes use of, in some of his known and acknowledged writings, are exactly conformable to the *Nicene creed*, but inconsistent with the language of the *Athanasian creed*."¹

Apollinaris, Bishop of *Laodicea* in the fourth century, "was a man of distinguished merit, says *Mosheim*, and one whose learned labours had rendered to religion the most important services. He defended strenuously the divinity of Christ against the *Arians*."² And says *Dr. Jortin*, "he was a man much esteemed for learning and piety. He thought, that Christ being one, it was impossible that two persons could be so united in him, as to make one person; and from thence he concluded, that in Christ, the Logos, or the divine word, supplied the place of the human soul."³

Nestorius,

¹ *Wilton's Review of the Articles*. page 82—85.

² *Mosheim's Eccles. Hist.* Vol. i. page 344. 8vo. Vol. i. p. 222. 4to. Edit.

³ *Jortin's Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* Vol. ii. page 202.

Nestorius, Bishop of *Constantinople* in the fifth century, 'held Christ to have two persons, as well as two natures.'

Eutychus, Abbot at *Constantinople* in the fifth century, 'asserted but one nature, as well as one person in Christ, and taught that the human nature was absorbed in the divine.'

Bishop *Pearson*, Bishop *Bull*, and Dr. *Owen* agree in opinion, that though God the Father is the fountain of the deity, the whole divine nature is communicated from the Father to the Son, and from both to the Spirit; yet so as that the Father and the Son are not separate, nor separable, from the divinity, but do still exist in it, and are most intimately united to it.'

Mr. *Howe* 'seems to suppose, that there are three distinct, eternal spirits, or distinct intelligent hypostases; each having his own distinct, singular, intelligent nature, united in such an inexplicable manner, as that (upon account of their perfect harmony, consent, and affection, to which he adds their mutual self-consciousness) they may be called the one God, as properly as the different corporeal, sensitive, and intelligent natures may be called one man.'

Mr. *Baxter* 'seems to have thought the three divine persons to be one and the same God, understanding, willing, and beloved by himself; or wisdom, power, and love; which he thinks illustrated by the three essential

‘ formalities (as he calls them) in the soul of
 ‘ man; viz. vital active power, intellect, and
 ‘ will; and in the sun, motion, light, and
 ‘ heat.’

Archbishop *Tillotson*, Dr. *Wallis*, and many
 others, ‘ thought the distinction between the
 ‘ three persons was only *modal*,’ coinciding
 with the leading sentiment of *Sabellius*.

Dr. *Clarke*’s ‘ scheme is, that there is one
 ‘ supreme being, who is the Father, and two
 ‘ subordinate, derived, and dependent beings.
 ‘ But he waves calling Christ a creature, as
 ‘ *Arius* did, and principally on that foundation
 ‘ disclaims the charge of *Arianism*.’

Dr. *Waterland*, Dr. *Abraham Taylor*, with
 the rest of the modern *Athanasians*, ‘ assert
 ‘ three proper distinct persons, entirely equal
 ‘ to and independent upon each other, yet
 ‘ making up one and the same being, and that
 ‘ though there may appear many things in-
 ‘ explicable in the scheme, it is to be charged
 ‘ to the weakness of our understanding, and
 ‘ not to the absurdity of the doctrine itself.’

Dr. *Thomas Burnet* ‘ maintained one self-
 ‘ existent and independent, and two dependent
 ‘ beings; but asserted, that the two latter are
 ‘ so united to and inhabited by the former,
 ‘ that, by virtue of such union, divine per-
 ‘ fections may be ascribed, and divine wor-
 ‘ ship paid to them.’

Dr. *Watts* ‘ maintained one supreme God
 ‘ dwelling in the human nature of Christ,
 ‘ whose

‘ whose pre-existent soul he supposes to have
 ‘ existed the first of all creatures. He speaks
 ‘ of the Logos, or divine word, as the wisdom of God, and the Holy Spirit, as the
 ‘ divine power, or the influence and effect of
 ‘ it; which he says, is a scriptural person, that
 ‘ is, spoken of figuratively in scripture under
 ‘ personal characters.’

Dr. *Doddridge* laid down and defended the
seven following propositions :—*First*, That
 ‘ the account given us in the scriptures of the
 ‘ old and new testament, of the nature, per-
 ‘ fections and providence of God, is agreeable
 ‘ to that which the light of nature discovers
 ‘ concerning them.’ *This* he proves, by those
 ‘ scriptures which expressly assert,—that there
 ‘ is a God, the creator of all things ;—that
 ‘ God is an eternal spirit, omnipresent, of per-
 ‘ fect knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness,
 ‘ justice, truth and holiness ;—that he is im-
 ‘ mutable and incomprehensible ;—that his
 ‘ providence is universal ;—that he is the one
 ‘ only God, and a being of all possible perfec-
 ‘ tions.’

Secondly, That ‘ the glorious person, who
 ‘ appeared in the world by the name of Jesus
 ‘ Christ, did not begin to exist, when he was
 ‘ conceived in the womb of his virgin mother,
 ‘ but had a being, not only before that peri-
 ‘ od, but before the creation of the world.’
This he proves, ‘ by *John*’s saying the Logos
 ‘ was in the beginning with God, and afterward

‘ was

‘ *was made flesh*; — our Lord’s often asserting
 ‘ his *coming down from heaven*; — Paul’s de-
 ‘ claring Christ *emptied himself* of some former
 ‘ glory; — the Lord’s appearing to *Isaiah*, and
 ‘ the *angel of God’s presence* to *Abraham, Jacob,*
 ‘ *Moses, &c.* — and the work of creation be-
 ‘ ing so expressly ascribed to Christ.’

Thirdly, That ‘ Christ was the person, in and
 ‘ by whom God appeared to men under the
 ‘ old testament, by the name of *Jehovah.*’
 This he proves, by referring to — ‘ the frequent
 ‘ visible appearance of *Jehovah* the God of *Is-*
 ‘ *rael*; — the invisibility of the Father; — *Jeho-*
 ‘ *vah’s* being expressly called, when visibly ap-
 ‘ pearing to men, *the angel of the Lord*, the *cap-*
 ‘ *tain of the Lord’s host*, the *angel in whom the*
 ‘ *name of God was*; — there being no hint of a
 ‘ plurality of persons successively employed as
 ‘ a medium of those divine manifestations; —
 ‘ one person being referred to as speaking, when
 ‘ numbers are said to be present; — this one
 ‘ person having been the medium of divine
 ‘ manifestations under the old testament, the
 ‘ *new* gives no intimation of his dismissal from
 ‘ that office; — but declares Christ to be the
 ‘ Logos of the Father, by whom he made the
 ‘ world, and governs the kingdom of provi-
 ‘ dence; — various things spoken ^{or done} by, or address-
 ‘ ed to *Jehovah* in the old testament, are in the
 ‘ *new* said to be spoken of, done by, or address-
 ‘ ed to Christ; — several things, by supposing
 ‘ this reference, become plain and easy; --- this
 ‘ was

‘ was the sense of the primitive Fathers ;---also
 ‘ the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, and other ancient *Jews*
 ‘ spoke the same language.’

Fourthly, That ‘ the names, titles, attributes,
 ‘ works and honours, which are frequently ap-
 ‘ propriated to God, are, or seem to be, ascribed
 ‘ to Christ in the scriptures.’ --- *This* he explains,
 by observing, how ‘ Christ—is called *Jehovah*
 ‘ and God ;—is entitled *God of Abraham, Isaac*
 ‘ and *Jacob, Lord of hosts, King of kings, Lord of*
 ‘ *lords, the first and the last* ;—is said to be
 ‘ omniscient, omnipresent, almighty, eternal,
 ‘ unchangeable ;----did create and support all
 ‘ things ;---and by divine appointment hath re-
 ‘ ligious worship given to him.’

Fifthly, That ‘ God is so united to the deri-
 ‘ ved nature of Christ, and doth so dwell in it,
 ‘ that by virtue of such union Christ may be
 ‘ properly called God, and such regards are
 ‘ due to him, as are not due to any created na-
 ‘ ture, or mere creature, be it in itself ever so
 ‘ excellent.’ --- *This* he argues from—‘ such di-
 ‘ vine names, titles, attributes, and works being
 ‘ ascribed to Christ, and his demanding or en-
 ‘ couraging such worship, as are elsewhere ap-
 ‘ propriated to God ;---his being distinct from
 ‘ God, yet co-ordinate with him, would infer a
 ‘ plurality of Gods :---the wonderful union
 ‘ there must be of God with the Man Christ, to
 ‘ lay a foundation for such ascriptions and re-
 ‘ gards ; --- and the scripture expressly speaking
 ‘ of such union, and of God as *dwelling* in
 ‘ Christ.’

Sixthly,

Sixthly, That 'divine names, titles, attributes, works, and worship are in such a manner ascribed in scripture to the Holy Spirit, as we cannot imagine would be used in speaking of a mere creature, and consequently he must be possessed of a nature properly divine.'---*This* he explains, by observing, how 'the Holy Spirit---seems often to be called *Jehovah* in the old testament, and God in the *new*;---divine perfections are certainly ascribed to him;----divine works as evidently,---and in several texts divine worship is given to him.'

The Doctor's *last* proposition is, 'That the scripture represents the Divine Being as appearing in, and manifesting himself by, the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each of which hath his peculiar province in accomplishing the work of our redemption and salvation, and to each of which we owe unlimited veneration, love, and obedience.'---*This* he proves by scripture representations of---God as *Father*, the Father of Christ, and thro' him the Father of all his people;---the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a divine person, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, by whom the Father manifested himself to us, and who with the Father is God over all;---the Holy Spirit, as a divine person, possessor of those perfections which are to be found in God alone;---Father, Son, and Spirit often mentioned together, as distinct personal characters;---our redemption as con-
trived

‘trived by the Father, purchased by the Son,
 ‘and applied by the Spirit, by whose assistance,
 ‘in the name of Christ, we are to make our ap-
 ‘proaches to the Father ;---and correspondent
 ‘regards to each are accordingly required from
 ‘us.’

I flatter myself, Sir, that the *short history* I have now given of the sentiments and expressions of the principal ancient and modern writers on this subject, is sufficiently authentic. If your learned friends will point out to me, wherein my account is defective, I shall esteem myself greatly obliged. With equal solicitude for truth, I now wish to divest myself of every wrong bias, while I proceed to those remarks and inferences, which the view we have been taking may naturally suggest.

*Candid reflections from the preceding
 short history.*

All the explications of this doctrine, under the ancient and modern names now mentioned, have in this one respect an equality, that they are all of them the sentiments of mere fallible men. It is to be presumed, that they endeavoured to put such a sense upon scripture, as appeared to each of them the most genuine; and in doing which they undoubtedly acted in a perfect conformity to the just and invaluable right of private judgment. It is also to be presumed, that they agreed, in what scripture represents as most important in this doctrine;
 viz.

viz. That *there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*; and that the appointed order and manner of christian worship is, *through Christ to have an access by one Spirit unto the Father*. But while each of them professed to agree with scripture, it seems to be a very desirable thing to have some plain and easy rule, by which any man of common understanding, though he may not have enjoyed a liberal or learned education, may so compare their different expressions and conceptions with each other, as to be able to estimate the degree in which they differ from one another. Perhaps there can be no rule so subservient to this purpose, as to ascertain the meaning of the word *Person*, because that word is, on all sides, either expressed, or referred to, but seems to be made use of by the above writers in very different senses. The several following definitions have been given of the word, as applied to the doctrine of the trinity.

Personality, says *Marckius*, ‘is a positive mode
‘ of being, ultimately terminating and filling a
‘ substantial nature, and giving it incommuni-
‘ cability.’

Personality, according to *Mr. Sloss*, ‘expresses
‘ that perfection of the divine nature, whereby
‘ it subsists three different ways, the Father, Son,
‘ and Holy Ghost, each of which, possessing the
‘ divine essence after his peculiar manner, there-
‘ by becomes a distinct person.’

Persona-

Personality, as Dr. *Waterland* defines it, ‘ is a
 ‘ single person, or an intelligent agent, having
 ‘ the distinct characters, I, Thou, He, and not
 ‘ divided or distinguished into more intelligent
 ‘ agents capable of the same characters.’

The word *Person*, according to Dr. *Daniel Scott*, and the generality of writers, whether divines or others, ‘ signifies, in its *philosophical*
 ‘ sense, one single, intelligent, voluntary agent,
 ‘ or conscious being.—And, in its *political* sense,
 ‘ it may express the different relations supported
 ‘ by the same philosophical person; as for in-
 ‘ stance, the same man may be father, husband,
 ‘ son, &c. or the same prince may be King of
 ‘ Great-Britain, Duke of Brunswick, and Trea-
 ‘ surer of the Empire.’

It is observed by Dr. *Watts*, that “ though
 “ the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are generally
 “ called *three distinct persons* by our divines, yet
 “ there are no writers, either abroad, or at home,
 “ that ever pretended this to be the express lan-
 “ guage of scripture. And there are very few,
 “ if any, of our most orthodox writers, (per-
 haps the Doctor should have excepted those,
 who may now be called real and consistent
Athanasians) who ever supposed the word *person*
 “ was to be taken here in the full, common
 “ and literal sense of it, for a *distinct conscious*
 “ *being*; but only in a *qualified* and *restrained*
 “ sense, or a sense that is analogous or a-kin to
 “ the common meaning of it among men. For
 “ *three distinct Persons*, in the common and lite-
 “ ral

“ ral sense of it, would be three distinct Spirits,
 “ which very few trinitarians allow.”^b

Now if we take the word *Person* according to the meaning of either of the *two first* definitions, we shall find it so obscure, and in a great measure so unintelligible, as rather to embarrass, than afford us any assistance. On the other hand, if we take it in its *philosophical and political* senses, we may with great advantage apply it to the present purpose, as will appear by the following specimens.

If we conceive of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with those who may now be called real and consistent *Athanasians*, as three *philosophical persons*, we do in effect allow a plurality of Gods.

If we consider the sacred Three, with the *Sabellians*, or the *Modalists*, (who also are usually ranked, and chuse to rank themselves, though very improperly, and with little consistence, under the name of *Athanasians*) as only the names and offices of the same philosophical person, we thereby sink the word person to its political sense. By this means we shall expose ourselves to one alarming consequence, That provided man had never fallen into sin, there never might have been such a person and character as Jesus Christ the Son of God. Not only Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Wallis, and many other great and good men, but even Mr. Baxter, seem to come under the same denomination.

If

^b Watts's Serm. Vol. ii. page 462. 8vo.

If, with both the *Modalists*, and the real *Athanasians*, we conceive of Christ, as having received his soul, as well as body, in the womb of his virgin mother, we should thereby entertain exactly the same idea of him, except what relates to supreme godhead, as was done by *Photinus*, and other ancient writers, and hath since been done by *Socinus*, and his numerous followers. In this respect there appears to be a remarkable affinity between the sentiments of the *Athanasians* and the *Socinians*.

If, with Dr. *Thomas Burnet*, we conceive of the Father as dwelling in the Son and Spirit; or, with Dr. *Watts*, and Dr. *Doddridge*, that the Father dwelleth in, and is united to, the human nature of Christ; in each of these cases ‘ the
‘ word *Person* must at least be considered in its
‘ political sense, but cannot amount to so much
‘ as a philosophical personality, unless we allow a plurality of Gods. And whether there
‘ is any medium between a philosophical and
‘ political person, (which we cannot certainly
‘ say there is not) we must confess is to us un-
‘ searchable.’ Or should we ‘ conceive of the
‘ union of the divine and human natures in
‘ one person, as we do of the soul and body
‘ in one man, we should thereby propose a case
‘ that is not parallel; since the divine and human natures are two distinct conscious beings,’ or two philosophical persons. Or to imagine, ‘ that God and the creature should
‘ have the same consciousness, must certainly
D ‘ exceed

‘ exceed our comprehension.’ From these premises it must follow, that the term *Person*, applied to the union of the divine and human nature of Christ, ‘ is rather to be taken in a ‘ political sense, to express the concurrent operation of the Deity with his human nature, in ‘ order to constitute a perfect mediator.’

Were we to assert, as Dr. *Clarke* did, that the *Logos*, or the divine word, is something between a created and a self-existent nature, we should involve ourselves in the endless labyrinth of an unconceivable distinction. Nor would our perplexity be diminished, were we to conceive with Bishop *Pearson*, Bishop *Bull*, and Dr. *Owen*, that the Father communicates his whole divine nature to the Son, and both Father and Son to the Spirit, according to the idea of derivation, in which the *Nicene* creed so remarkably differs from the *Athanasian*; or, with Mr. *Howe*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct, eternal Spirits, so united in perfect harmony, consent, and affection, as to have a mutual self-consciousness.

Were we to hope for uniformity in explaining a distinction in the Deity, among the subscribers to the *Common Prayer*, and the most respectable divines of the *Church of England*, we shall no where find ourselves more disappointed. This is manifest in the widely different sentiments and expressions of Bishop *Bull*, Bishop *Pearson*, Archbishop *Tillotson*, Dr. *Wallis*, Dr. *Thomas Burnet*, and Dr. *Clarke*; who are all
of

of them as little agreed among themselves, as they are with the *Athanasian* creed.

Were we, once more, to suppose ourselves to agree in sentiment with *Apollinaris*, Dr. *Watts*, and Dr. *Doddridge*, we may then, perhaps, speak with as much simplicity and precision, as the nature of the subject will admit, and as scripture itself seems to suggest. In this view we may say, with Dr. *Cotton Mather*, on one of his private fast-days; “ In the person of Christ
“ my Saviour, I behold the *infinite* God assu-
“ ming the *man Jesus* into such an intimate and
“ conscious union with himself, as to constitute
“ a glorious *God-man*, or a man, who hath the
“ *fullness of the Godhead* dwelling personally in
“ him.”

Amongst the writers of character, that are now living, the *four* following deserve particular regard, either for adhering to scripture language, or avoiding exceptionable human phrases.

—“ Let us consider, says Mr. *Orton*, Christ’s
“ dignity and rank. He is, by a generation,
“ which none can declare, the Son of God; his
“ only begotten Son; and therefore superior to
“ all creatures both in earth and heaven. He
“ is, by an union which can neither be explain-
“ ed nor conceived, one with the Father; the
“ brightness of his Father’s glory, and the ex-
“ press image of his person. We have no words

D 2

to

• Jennings’s Abridged Life of Dr. Cotton Mather. Page 78.—*Triumphs of Faith*. Page 172.—*Burnham’s Pious Memorials*. Page 347, 348.

“ to denote greater ideas than these, nor can the
 “ mind of man raise itself to nobler concep-
 “ tions.”^d—Dr. *Wilton* makes this solemn con-
 fession. “ Upon the authority of divine reve-
 “ lation, I most firmly believe the true and pro-
 “ per Deity of the Son and Spirit, as essentially
 “ partakers of the Divine nature. The doctrine
 “ of the Trinity, I receive as the doctrine of
 “ scripture. It appears to me to be clearly
 “ taught in the Bible, but the mode of this
 “ incomprehensible union and relation, is no
 “ where, that I can find, the subject of divine
 “ revelation. And probably the limited extent
 “ of human comprehension in the present state,
 “ might be the reason why it is not revealed.”
 —Dr. *Gibbons* advises parents to “ acquaint
 “ their children thus. We are baptized, or
 “ take upon us a christian profession, in the
 “ name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy
 “ Ghost, and these three are not to be considered
 “ by us as creatures, no not of the highest rank,
 “ as the descriptions, attributes, honours, and
 “ works of the Deity belong to each of them,
 “ and yet that there is but one God, however
 “ variously distinguished.”^e—And Dr. *Stennett*
 says, “ As to the person of Christ, scripture
 “ gives us the most exalted descriptions of it,
 “ such

^d *Orton's Sermons on Christian Zeal.* page 50.

^e *Wilton's Review of the Articles.* page 87.

^f *Gibbons's Female Worthies.* Vol. i. *Address to Parents.* page xxii.

“ such as demand our highest homage and most
 “ profound reverence. He is *the only begot-*
 “ *ten, the well-beloved and eternal Son of God.*
 “ *The brightness of the Father’s glory, and the ex-*
 “ *press image of his person. He in whom dwell-*
 “ *eth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The*
 “ *true God and eternal life. God over all, blessed*
 “ *for ever.* This divine person consents to be-
 “ come a man, and to unite humanity with
 “ deity. He is, *Emmanuel, God with us. God*
 “ *manifest in the flesh.*”²

Every serious mind, that attentively exa-
 mines, and re-examines, what hath now been
 represented, must acknowledge, that there are
 difficulties attending every scheme, which hath
 ever been proposed, for the explanation of this
 doctrine. ‘ Nor is it a thing to be wondered
 ‘ at, that we are so much confounded, when we
 ‘ enquire into the nature of superior beings,
 ‘ considering how little we know of our own
 ‘ nature and manner of existence.’ That the
 difficulties of this subject have not only puzzled
 the most penetrating minds, but obliged them,
 after all their deepest researches, to plead for
 moderation and candour, will fully appear from
 the following extracts from their writings, which
 discover a temper and spirit truly worthy the at-
 tention and imitation of every impartial enquirer
 after truth, and especially every disciple of the
 meek and lowly Jesus.

D 3

Erasmus

² *Stennett’s Discourses on Personal Religion. Vol. ii. page*
 33, 34. 2d Edit.

Erasmus Roterodamus, at the early dawn of the reformation, and while he was surrounded with ignorance and bigotry in their most pernicious forms, wisely observes [on 1 *Tim.* i. 6.]

“ We are contending without end, what it is
 “ that distinguisheth the Father from the Son,
 “ and both from the Holy Spirit; whether it
 “ be a thing, or a relation; and how it can be,
 “ that they can be said to be three, of which
 “ one is not the other, when they are but one
 “ in essence. How much more to the purpose
 “ would it be for us, to take all possible care
 “ piously and holily to worship and adore this
 “ trinity, whose majesty we are unable to pry
 “ into; and to express their ineffable concord
 “ by our concord among ourselves, so that we
 “ may in time come to be in partnership with
 “ them?”

Dr. Jeremiah Taylor, who lived in a more enlightened day, but not less disposed to controversial rage, and particularly on this subject, with his usual largeness of thought and spirituality of temper, makes this solemn declaration (on *John* vii. 17.) “ He that goeth about to
 “ speak of the mystery of the trinity, and doeth
 “ it by words and names of man’s invention,
 “ talking of essences and existences, hypostases
 “ and personalities, priorities in co-equalities,
 “ &c. and unity in pluralities, may amuse him-
 “ self, and build a tabernacle in his head, and
 “ talk something he knows not what. But the
 “ good man, who feels the power of the Father,
 “ and

“ and to whom the Son is become wisdom and
 “ righteousness, sanctification and redemption;
 “ in whose heart the love of the Spirit of God
 “ is shed abroad, this man, though he under-
 “ stand nothing of what is unintelligible, yet
 “ he alone truly understandeth the doctrine of
 “ the trinity.”

Bishop *Pearson* argues, “ In the very name
 “ of Father, there is something of eminence,
 “ which is not in that of Son; and some kind
 “ of priority we must ascribe unto him, whom
 “ we call the *first*, in respect of him, whom we
 “ term the *second* person; and as we cannot but
 “ ascribe it, so we must endeavour to preserve
 “ it. Now that privilege, or priority, consist-
 “ eth only in this, that the Father hath the es-
 “ sence of himself, the Son by communication
 “ from the Father. From whence he acknow-
 “ ledgeth, that he is *from him*, that he *liveth by*
 “ *him*, that the *Father gave him to have life in*
 “ *himself*.—*I can of mine own self do nothing*,
 “ saith our Saviour, because he is not of him-
 “ self, and whosoever receives his being, must
 “ receive his power from another.—We must
 “ not therefore so far endeavour to involve our-
 “ selves in the darkness of this mystery, as to
 “ deny that glory which is clearly due unto the
 “ Father; whose preeminence undeniably con-
 “ sisteth in this, that he is God not of any
 “ other, but of himself, and that there is no
 “ other person who is God, but is God of him.
 “ ~~It~~ It is no diminution to the Son, to say
 “ he

“ he is from another, for his very name imports
 “ as much ; but it were a diminution to the
 “ Father to speak so of him ; and there must
 “ be some preeminence where there is place for
 “ derogation. What the Father is, he is from
 “ none ; what the Son is, he is from him ; what
 “ the *first* is, he giveth ; what the *second* is, he
 “ receiveth. The *first* is a Father indeed by
 “ reason of his Son, but he is not God by rea-
 “ son of him ; whereas the Son is not so only in
 “ regard of the Father, but also God by reason
 “ of the same. — The Father is styled *one God*,
 “ *the true God, the only true God, the God and*
 “ *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: Which, as
 “ it is most true, and so fit to be believed, is also
 “ a most necessary truth, and therefore to be
 “ acknowledged, for the avoiding multiplica-
 “ tion and plurality of Gods. For if there
 “ were more than one, which were from none,
 “ it could not be denied but there were more
 “ Gods than one.”^b

Bishop Bull concludes, “ That all the catho-
 “ lic doctors, both before and after the Nicene
 “ Council, have agreed, that the Father is the
 “ fountain, the origin, and principle of the di-
 “ vinity of the Son.” But on a subject so dif-
 “ ficult, he makes this modest and devout reflec-
 “ tion. “ As long as we are in this pilgrimage
 “ state, we wish to know, rather than attain to
 “ any clear discovery, how the Son is united to
 “ the

^b Pearson on the Creed, page 34, 35, 40.

“ the Father ; or, how the Father communi-
 “ cates himself to the Son ; or, what the Spirit
 “ is ; or how the Father, Son, and Spirit are
 “ one ; or, wherein they differ from each other,
 “ though united together.”¹

Dr. *Owen* observes, “ That the boldness and
 “ curiosity of the schoolmen, and some others,
 “ in expressing the way and manner of the ge-
 “ neration of the Son, by similitudes of our un-
 “ derstanding and its acts, declaring how he is
 “ the image of the Father, in their terms, are
 “ intolerable and full of offence ; nor are the
 “ rigid impositions of those words and terms,
 “ in this matter, which they or others have
 “ found out to express it by, of any better na-
 “ ture.”——“ The Father is the fountain of
 “ all, as in *being* and *existence*, so in operation.
 “ The Son is *of* the Father, begotten by him,
 “ and therefore as unto his work sent by him.
 “ The Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father
 “ and the Son, and therefore is sent and given
 “ by

¹ Decretum illud Synodi Nicenæ, quo statuitur Filium Dei esse Θεὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ, Deum de Deo, suo calculo comprobant doctores catholici, tum qui ante, tum qui post Synodum illam scripsere. *Bull. Defens. Fid. Nic.* § iv. Thef. i. p. 222. Lond. Edit. 1721. Dum viatores sumus, cognoscere optamus potius, quam liquido cognoscimus (ut doctissimi *Athenagoræ* verbis utar) τις ἢ τοῦ παιδὸς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα ἰσότης ; &c. i. e. Quænam Filii ad Patrem sit unio ; quæ Patris ad Filium communio ; quid sit Spiritus ; quæ horum tantorum sit unio, quæ discretio unitorum, Spiritus scilicet, Filii et Patris. p. 256.

“ by them, as to all the works which he immediately effecteth.”^k

Archbishop *Tillotson* says of the schoolmen,
 “ It cannot be denied but that these speculative
 “ and very acute men, who wrought a great part
 “ of their divinity out of their own brains, as
 “ spiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels,
 “ have started a thousand subtleties about this
 “ mystery, such as no christian is bound to trouble his head withal, much less is it necessary
 “ for him to understand, and least of all is it necessary to believe them.—It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters;
 “ and if any man will venture to say more,
 “ every other man surely is at his own liberty
 “ to believe as he sees reason.”^l

Bishop *Burnet* resolves, “ Instead of going
 “ farther into explanations of that, which is certainly far beyond all our apprehensions, and
 “ that *ought therefore to be let alone*; I shall consider what declarations are made in the scripture concerning this point.”^m

Mr. *Robert Fleming*, whose *Christology, or Discourse concerning Christ*, in 3 vols. 8vo. discovers at once his eminent piety and evangelical spirit, as well as his great learning, critical abilities, and excellent disposition for free and candid enquiry

^k *Owen on Heb.* — *Of the Spirit.* page 67.

^l *Tillotson's Works.* Vol. i. Sermon. 48. page 460. 10th Edit.

^m *Burnet's Expos. of the Articles.* page 83.

quiry after truth, hath this edifying passage.

“ I cannot but take occasion here, to exhort
 “ those, who own and defend this doctrine, to
 “ leave off the too common practice of inter-
 “ weaving their own notions with it, and to re-
 “ turn again to the mere scriptural account,
 “ resting satisfied in the simplicity thereof. By
 “ this way we shall be able more easily and sa-
 “ tisfactorily to defend this point, than ever we
 “ are like to do any other way. For, I think,
 “ we ought to remember, that *God is no further*
 “ *responsible for his own truths, than as he hath*
 “ *revealed them in the bible, and clothed them there*
 “ *in his own words and expressions.* So that when
 “ we exceed these terms and boundaries, and
 “ borrow notions and words, either from hea-
 “ then philosophers, or the cob-web speculations
 “ of the school-men, we would do well to
 “ consider, whether we be not defending an
 “ *unscriptural trinity.* And it is but too
 “ plain, what hurt men have done this way,
 “ from the various, yea and opposite schemes
 “ they have given of this doctrine, by desert-
 “ ing or going beyond the plain scriptural ac-
 “ count.”^a

Dr. Gregory Sharp, the late very learned *Mas-
 ter of the Temple*, so exactly agrees with Mr.
Fleming in sentiment, that, though in the order
 of time he might properly be mentioned last of
 all, yet his pertinent remark will naturally come
 in

^a *Fleming's Christology*. Vol. i. page 190, 191.

in here. " Let the scriptures, says he, speak
 " for themselves. Let the doctrine of Christ
 " and his Apostles be delivered in their own
 " words. Lay aside all human inventions and
 " additions to the words of God, all terms that
 " are unscriptural and barbarous, and peace and
 " unity will soon be restored to the church.
 " These are of infinitely greater value than con-
 " troversy; that is, than the rage of parties,
 " which subsists principally upon artificial
 " terms, not to be found in scripture, but the
 " jargon of school-men, from whom we received
 " nothing more than hard names of their own
 " invention, equally the disgrace of language,
 " philosophy and religion." Elsewhere his sen-
 timents appear to have been the same with Dr.
Doddridge's propositions, and particularly in re-
 ference to our Lord's pre-existent nature. After
 reviewing the various names and titles given to
 Christ, and proving that all the appearances of
 Jehovah in the old testament were no other
 than the person of Christ, he concludes with
 these words. " In this view of the person and
 " office of Messiah, we encounter no contradic-
 " tions, we meet with no insuperable difficul-
 " ties. God is invisible, without parts or pas-
 " sions. *It is the image of the invisible God, the*
 " *first born of every creature, the brightness of his*
 " *glory, and the χαρακτηρ the express image of his*
 " substance, who assumed a body, and also suf-
 " fered. We neither confound him with the
 " person of the Father, nor reduce him to the
 " level

“ level of men or angels. We acknowledge
 “ all that the scriptures have revealed of him,
 “ and it is very dangerous to advance beyond
 “ them.”

Dr. *Edmund Calamy*, at the very time when
 the nation was fullest of this controversy, and
 when he himself was preaching and writing on
 the *Athanasian* side of the question, yet expresses
 himself in this cautious manner. “ Let us be
 “ thankful for what knowledge we have, and
 “ make the best use of it we can. And in the
 “ mean time humbly own our ignorance and
 “ darkness, as to the way and manner of what
 “ God hath been pleased to reveal to us with
 “ reference to the substance of this doctrine.
 “ And whatever we are ignorant of, or in the
 “ dark about, let us conclude (as we have
 “ good reason) that if we have but the grace
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of
 “ God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
 “ with us, we have not only as much know-
 “ ledge of the blessed trinity, as is necessary to
 “ our own scriptural orthodoxy in that doctrine,
 “ but as much knowledge of it as is necessary
 “ to secure our happiness, peace, and comfort;
 “ both in this life, and in the next. And, if
 “ this will not satisfy us, and at the same time
 “ make us thankful, I think we are both un-
 “ reasonable and inexcusable.”

Mr.

* *Gregory Sharp's Sermons*. N. 16. page 285. — And his
*Second Argument in defence of Christianity taken from ancient
 prophecies*. page 92, 93.

† *Calamy's Sermons on the Trinity*, page 387, 388.

Mr. *Benjamin Bennet*, author of the *Christian Oratory*, so well known for his judicious and pacific, as well as for his pious and devotional temper, tells us, what indeed is of the highest importance; "If you will receive it, I think it a very useful truth, (which, had it been attended to, would have prevented many controversies, that have disturbed the christian church) viz. That our chief concern with the Son of God is as Mediator. . We are neither concerned to know precisely, what he was before he was incarnate, how employed in the world above, nor what he will be, and how employed, after his mediation is finished. Our present business is with the Mediator, whom God hath exalted, to whom every knee must bow, and shall bow at last, till the end cometh, and he hath delivered up the kingdom to the Father."¹

Dr. *Watts* is the last I will mention, however easy it might be to add many more, who concurred with him in the same liberal and pious reflections. "I am well persuaded in my own mind, says he, that neither the *Arian*, nor *Socinian* writers, neither the *Sabellian*, nor the *Tritheistic* explainers, nor any of their followers have hit upon the true solution of the difficulty. In this enlightened age of search and enquiry, men will not be satisfied to hear us make use of inexplicable and mysterious terms,

¹ *Bennet's Christian Oratory*. Vol. ii. page 178.

“ terms, and tell them, that the sense of them
 “ is never to be known. They will not think,
 “ that doctrine can be of so much importance
 “ to us, which is wrapt up in perpetual dark-
 “ ness, and can never be understood. Our final
 “ salvation doth not depend on our exact and
 “ skilful knowledge of the true modus of ex-
 “ plaining this heavenly doctrine. Great and
 “ pious men in several ages have got safe to
 “ heaven with very different schemes and hypo-
 “ theses. It is abundantly sufficient for salva-
 “ tion, if we believe the various offices, which
 “ are assigned to the Father, Son, and Spirit
 “ in the dispensation of the gospel, and that
 “ each of them hath a divine all-sufficiency to
 “ sustain their offices, and to receive the ho-
 “ nours due to them.—Since I have searched
 “ more studiously into this mystery of late, I
 “ have learned more of my own ignorance. So
 “ that when I speak of these *unsearchables*, I
 “ abate much of my younger assurance, nor do
 “ my later thoughts venture so far into the
 “ particular modes of explaining this sacred dis-
 “ tinction in the Godhead. There appears to
 “ me good reason to doubt, whether there can
 “ be three distinct and different wills in the one
 “ God, the one infinite Spirit. I was afraid to
 “ assert it heretofore, and I am more afraid to
 “ assert it now. Reason and scripture join to
 “ teach me, that there can be but one God,
 “ and that this God is a Spirit. What distinc-
 “ tion may be in this one Spirit, I know not.
 Yet

“ Yet I am fully established in the belief of the
 “ *Deity of the blessed Three*, though I know not
 “ the manner of explication.—Let us wonder
 “ at the blessedness of the Man Christ Jesus in
 “ his approach to God. His very union to
 “ God is habitual blessedness. He is constitu-
 “ ted near to God by an unspeakable union.
 “ What joys, what unknown delights, above
 “ our language, and above our thoughts, pos-
 “ sels the holy soul of the Man Jesus ! For he
 “ is the nearest creature to the blessed God ;
 “ for he is one with Godhead. The son of
 “ *David* according to the flesh, is joined in a
 “ perpetual union to the eternal God, and thus
 “ *he is over all God blessed for evermore.*”

It would have been unspeakably happy for
 christian churches, both ancient and modern, if
 the differences relating to this doctrine, among
 the learned and pious, had been viewed and ad-
 justed according to the healing sentiments of the
twelve authors last mentioned. This would have
 appeased the rage of persecution among fellow-
 christians, and have made those, whose appre-
 hensions were most different, to agree to differ.
 This would have filled their minds with bro-
 therly love towards each other, instead of wrath
 and anger, animosity and contention, with every
 odious form of mutual resentment, censure and
 reproach. Certainly this ought to have been
 the case, considering, not only how all this

strange

* *Watts's Preface to Scott's Sermon on John xx. 28.*

——— *Serm. Vol. i. page 250, 260, 8vo.*

strange fire was kindled by unjustly refusing every one's right to interpret scripture for himself, but that many of those, whose opinions were most different from each other, were persons of the most diligent application to study, the greatest reading and learning, and of the most excellent characters. When Bishop *Hoadley* is speaking of Dr. *Clarke* and Dr. *Waterland*, he makes this tender reflection. " Since men
 " of such thought and such learning have shewn
 " the world, in their own example, how widely
 " the most honest enquirers after truth may
 " differ, upon such subjects; this, methinks,
 " should a little abate our mutual censures; and
 " a little take off from our positiveness, about
 " the necessity of explaining, in *this* or *that* one
 " determinate sense, the ancient passages relating
 " to points of so sublime a nature." " We
 " may therefore assure ourselves, that many
 " things asserted on one side and the other, relating
 " to this doctrine, are by no means so *fundamental*
 " in religion," as many have unwarily imagined. But the doctrine itself, as stated in scripture, is most assuredly of the highest importance. Nor is it of less importance, that *we*
speak this wisdom of God in a mystery, yea, these deep things of God, not in the words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. [1 Cor. ii. 7, 10, 13.] In this, and in every doctrine of mere revelation, scripture is

E

the

the only infallible standard of sentiment and expression, and the most powerful bond of mutual forbearance, peace and love. " If, says Mr. Benjamin Bennet, christians may not be allowed to think differently, in a doctrine so much above us, which none profess to understand, and in which none on earth, I presume, think aright in all particulars; if they may not be allowed here to intrench themselves within the limits and terms of holy scripture, and suspend their belief of human phrases, where they have no knowledge, no ideas; if this may not be allowed, without breach of charity and peace, I see no help for it, but we must live in a state of slavery, hypocrisy or war." " It is of great importance, says Mr. Baxter, that we err not by giving too little to the sacred scriptures.—[This they do] who deny it to be intelligible and perfect, as to its proper use, *without human supplements*, which befriend church tyranny, leaving it to clergymen to make us a new faith, new sacraments, a new religion at their pleasure, and to persecute good men, who dare not renounce the scripture's sufficiency, and Christ's perfection, by obeying their dictates and *canons* as co-ordinate with Christ, if not co-equal. These make church-concord utterly impossible, while they deny the sufficiency, not only of the essentials, but of all the Bible, to be the terms of concord,

¹ Bennet's *Ironicum*. page 98.

" cord, without their supplements or additions.
 " As if Christ, who *is the author and finisher*
 " *of our faith*, and the maker of his own church,
 " had not so much as told us, what a church,
 " or a christian is, or whom we must take for
 " such into our love and communion; nor fixed
 " the necessary terms of union, but left them to
 " none knows who, even fallible men, liable to
 " error and tyranny, that can but get upper-
 " most, and say then, that they are the true
 " church, and the masters that must be obeyed,
 " while they are themselves of as many minds
 " as they are of different countries, interests,
 " and degrees of knowledge and sincerity."

Let us but suppose any man to come to scrip-
 ture with impartial enquiry, and fervent prayer
 for divine assistance, and then, whatever may be
 the result concerning his scheme of sentiment on
 this head, it cannot any way affect his eternal
 state. " We shall be judged, says *Saurin*, ac-
 " cording to what is clear in the gospel itself;
 " and not according to what is abstruse and
 " impenetrable in the systems of the schools.
 " What inducement could we possibly have to
 " endeavour to inform ourselves, were we pos-
 " sessed of a notion, that our sentence would be
 " regulated by our ideas on a thousand questi-
 " ons, which some men have boldly stated, rash-
 " ly decided, and barbarously enforced upon
 " others. Were it necessary to have clear and

E 2

" complete

“ complete ideas of—the nature of the divine
 “ essence, — and of many other such questions
 “ as obscure as useless ; were it necessary, in
 “ order to receive a favourable sentence,—who
 “ dare examine these questions ? But, christian
 “ soul ! banish thy scruples. Thy God, thy
 “ judge, is the sovereign of his creatures ; but he
 “ is not their tyrant. Thou art free ; not a
 “ slave. The œconomy, according to which
 “ thou shalt be judged, is an œconomy of light ;
 “ and whatever is impenetrable and undecided
 “ in the gospel, hath no relation to that trial,
 “ which thou wilt undergo.”^w

The gospel hath sufficiently ascertained the terms of salvation for every man, by requiring, not a speculative, but a practical faith, even such *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, as is productive of holy and persevering obedience. “ Though the scripture is plain, says Dr. Calamy, that *whosoever believeth not in Christ* (revealed to them) *shall be condemned* ; yet it neither is so, nor warrants our being so, as to all other truths, till it can be made appear, that they are of equal necessity with this. — I must confess, I make a mighty difference between faith in Christ as a Saviour, and the belief of some particular doctrines which he hath revealed, of which I am apt to make estimate, from the influence which they respectively have upon practice.”^x

Were

^w *Saurin's Sermons*. Vol. iii. p. 286, 287. Translated by Mr. Robinson.

^x *Calamy's Defence of Nonconformity*. Part ii. p. 267, 268.

Were we to imagine this divine appointment may be so modified, as to make any man's everlasting welfare depend on his attachment to any set of notions, would it not be applying the same absurdity to doctrines, and particularly to this of the trinity, as the *Papists* so commonly do to that of transubstantiation? It reminds me of my debating that subject with a *Roman Catholic* at *Brussels*, in the year 1740, when I proposed to him this very plain question, Which of these two men he would look upon to be in a state of salvation; one, who disbelieved the doctrine of transubstantiation, but was in all respects eminently virtuous and devout; or another, who believed that doctrine, and lived in the allowed commission of every species of criminality? Alas! I was soon convinced, that it was in vain to reason any longer with a person, who declared to me in the most solemn manner, "That the former would undoubtedly be damned, and the latter as undoubtedly be saved."

Happier was Archbishop *Usher's* dispute with a *Jesuit*, whom the *Papists* styled, *the rock of learning*, and who was chose by a *Popish* lady for her champion, while Dr. *Usher* was the choice of her husband, a *Protestant* knight in *Ireland*. The Dr. began the disputation with entreating the lady carefully to observe, "That scripture is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. That she might easily understand both the disputants, as long as they kept within the limits of scripture. But when

“ we fly, says he, to subtle distinctions, in order
 “ to evade the force of plain texts; or, leaving
 “ scripture, shall take refuge in authors you
 “ know nothing of, then be assured, that we
 “ are at a loss, and seek victory rather than
 “ truth. Keep this rule, Madam, in your mind,
 “ for this gentleman dares not deny it to be a
 “ good one.” Accordingly, in the course of
 the disputation, the lady saw, that her champion
 was not to be confined to scripture, but had
 recourse to languages and authors quite out of
 her reach, and in the issue she became a good
 Protestant.”¹

No one could exceed the humble and pious
 Dr. *Watts*, either in laborious and candid en-
 quiries after truth, or in fervent prayers that his
 attempts might be successful. We have a
 very remarkable proof of this, in a posthumous
 publication, entitled, *A solemn address to the
 great and ever-blessed God on a review of what
 he had written in the trinitarian controversy.*²
 Part of that address is as follows. “ Hadst
 “ thou informed me, gracious Father, in any
 “ place of thy word, that this divine doctrine
 “ is not to be understood by men, and yet they
 “ were required to believe it, I would have
 “ subdued all my curiosity to faith, and submit-
 “ ted my wandering and doubtful imaginations,
 “ as far as it was possible, to the holy and wise
 “ deter-

¹ *Clarke's Life of Usher*, 4to. page 232—234. Fol. page 236.

² *Watts's Works*, 4to. Vol. iv. page 640—643.

“ determinations of thy word. — Thou art wit-
 “ nefs, O my God, with what diligence, with
 “ what conftancy and care, I have read and
 “ fearched thy holy word ; how early and late,
 “ by day and by night, I have been making
 “ thefe enquiries : how fervently I have been
 “ seeking thee, on my bended knees, and di-
 “ rected my humble addreffes to thee, to en-
 “ lighten my darknefs, and to fhew me the
 “ meaning of thy word, that I may learn what
 “ I muft believe, and what I muft praftife,
 “ with regard to this doctrine, in order to please
 “ thee, and obtain eternal life. — Forbid it, O
 “ my God, that ever I fhould be fo unhappy
 “ as to unglorify my Father, my Saviour, or
 “ my Sanctifier, in any of my sentiments or ex-
 “ preffions concerning them.”

If fuch diligent, candid and devout enquiry
 after truth had been more generally praftifed
 among chriftians, they would never have allow-
 ed themfelves in forming rash conclufions con-
 cerning each others characters, merely on ac-
 count of their different sentiments on this doc-
 trine. Thofe, who adhere to the *Athanaſian*
 ſcheme would never have aſcribed the opinions
 of any of their oponents to want of *grace*. Nor
 would the latter have imputed the doctrine of
 the former to want of *ſenſe*. Why ſhould *moral*
 defects be neceſſarily connected with one ſpecies
 of ſpeculation, or *natural* defects with another ?
 How much better for both ſides to have waved
 all indecent recriminations ! “ The evil lies,

“ says Mr. *Elliot*, not in any essential difference
 “ that there is in the faith of the *Unitarians* and
 “ *Trinitarians* about the Trinity ; but in their
 “ laying such a stress on their different explana-
 “ tions of it, as to judge, censure, and exclude
 “ each other from the churches of Christ, mere-
 “ ly on account of that difference. And I am
 “ firmly persuaded, that such a conduct is not
 “ warranted by scripture, nor acceptable to
 “ God, nor profitable to the saints; but is quite
 “ the reverse in all, and every one of them.”*

In such a doubtful case, how happy to say with
 the apostle, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his
 own mind! Why dost thou judge thy brother?*
 Hath not God given, both to him and to thee,
 a right to judge, in such matters, each for him-
 self? Had these rational and scriptural confi-
 derations been more generally attended to,
 according to their obvious importance, there
 would have been less occasion to admire the
 candour of Mr. *Robert Robinson*, of *Cambridge*,
 in his *Plea for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ*.
 1st Edit. Though he appears to be one of its
 warmest advocates, yet he shows himself to be
 equally warm for the most charitable and bro-
 therly treatment of those, who are thought most
 of all to differ from him. See this in his man-
 ner of proposing and answering the following
 questions.——“ What a strange divinity of

“ Christ you hold ! why don't you explain
 “ it

* *Elliot's Divine Revelation the only test of sound doctrine*,
 page 331.

“ it by the *Athanasian* creed, or by some ap-
 “ proved system? Because I don’t understand
 “ it well enough, and because creeds do not sa-
 “ tisfy me. Would you have me explain what
 “ I do not understand?—Why do you not per-
 “ secute, at least with the tongue, those mon-
 “ strous *Unitarians*? Because I have no warrant
 “ from Christ to do so, nor the least inclination
 “ to forge one.—This is well enough: But why
 “ do you praise them in every company? Be-
 “ cause a mistaking man may merit praise for
 “ that very industry, which hath led him into
 “ an error, and for that integrity which makes
 “ him, against his interest, support it.—But
 “ what occasion is there to keep company with
 “ them, and to maintain an intimacy with them?
 “ Because on every other article they edify me,
 “ and on this we agree to differ. In the posses-
 “ sion of this truth, I think, I have the advan-
 “ tage of them. In regard to many others, I
 “ am not worthy to speak to them; I glory in
 “ being their disciple.—In what light then do
 “ you consider a sincere man, who denies our
 “ Lord’s divinity? In the light of a mistaken
 “ brother; in every other attitude an object of
 “ esteem, and in that of denying the divinity
 “ of my Lord, an object of my tenderest com-
 “ passion.—All this argues great coldness to
 “ your Lord! I would rather be frozen into a
 “ formalist, than inflamed with the fire of hell;
 “ in the first case I should be a harmless statue,
 “ in the last a destroyer like the devil.”

In

In one of the preceding questions Mr. *Robinson's* opponents are called *Unitarians*. Under that term, according to its real import, are comprehended all those, who do not explain the distinction in the Godhead by three distinct self-conscious beings. So that every one is an *Unitarian*, who is not a *Tritheist*. But it is evident, by the animadversions contained in Mr. *Robinson's* tract, that he more immediately refers to such *Unitarians*, as are the reputed followers of *Photinus* and *Socinus*. If there is a propriety in making use of such terms, as distinguish those sentiments concerning the trinity, which deviate from what is properly called *Athanasianism*, this of *Unitarian* is much more intelligible than that of *Arian*. The latter is but one of the many different species included under the former. Yet nothing hath been more common, though nothing can be more improper, than to call all those *Arians*, who do not rank themselves with the followers of *Athanasius*. The impropriety is still more apparent, as there never was a time, perhaps, when the real followers of *Arius* were so few, as in the present day, or those of the other different species of *Unitarians* more numerous.

But whatever *fame* or *infamy*, according to vulgar estimation, may belong to names or parties, it is a most important truth, that Christ hath given us no warrant, as Mr. *Robinson* well argues, to speak evil of others, on account of their differing from us in religious sentiments,
and

and particularly in their manner of conception and expression concerning this doctrine. For, as the learned *Grotius* observes [in the motto of the title page], “ If there be any one point in
 “ the whole compass of christian doctrine, in
 “ which it is easy, either to be in an error, or
 “ to be accused of being so, it is this of the
 “ trinity.” Should many serious christians be found in the rank of such accusers, we need not be surprized. Probably they have read little upon the subject, that had any tendency to discover to them its difficulties, and how much the most learned and pious in different ages and countries have differed from each other in their conceptions and expressions concerning it. Perhaps all their ideas of it are confined within the narrow limits of a particular party, and all their ways of expressing it have been dictated to them by their catechisms and accustomed forms of worship. The many disadvantages they are under for attaining to more distinct knowledge, added to their undesigning simplicity and serious piety, will go far in apologizing for them; at least these will entitle them to the tender pity of those, whom they rashly and ignorantly condemn. But it will not be so easy to excuse persons of a more liberal education, especially ministers of the gospel, if they should so far forget themselves, and the importance of their character and example, as to promote reputed orthodoxy, by what, in them, makes near approaches to real immorality. For is it not immoral, to murder the reputation of
 others

others by charges without proof, or by plausible insinuations of such things as have no real existence but in vulgar prejudices? Is not this *holding the truth in unrighteousness*; not as it is in *Jesus*, but as it is in the grand *accuser of the brethren*? Hath not such a temper and conduct a tendency in the most effectual manner to prejudice the minds of young people, and especially of young divines, against the very doctrine it is designed to inculcate? No doubt such intemperate zeal will plead conscience for what it does. But the plea is utterly insufficient, as long as their practice is irrational and unscriptural. Thus *Calvin* pleaded conscience, when he persecuted *Servetus* to a violent death. Archbishop *Cranmer* as conscientiously concurred with the persecutors of *Lambert* the martyr, and read the sentence of his burning at the stake. It must be allowed, that both *Calvin* and *Cranmer* acted according to the mistaken but prevailing spirit of the age in which they lived, when persecution for mere sentiments in religion was adopted by every party that happened to rule. Such a mistaken conscience our Lord describes, when he says, *Whosoever killeth you, will think he doeth God service.*

“ If, said the excellent Mr. *John Jennings*
 “ to his pupils, it be your professed judgment,
 “ as I persuade myself it will be, that scrip-
 “ ture is to be the only standard of ortho-
 “ doxy; and if, out of regard to that, you
 “ depart from consecrated forms and received
 “ opinions

“ opinions; you must expect to be very se-
 “ verely handled, by those who are enslaved
 “ to them. For they will think themselves
 “ indispensibly obliged to oppose your repu-
 “ tation and success; lest you should propa-
 “ gate your mischievous notions, and fill our
 “ churches with heterodoxy and seduction.”

Dr. Doddridge, who was one of Mr. Jennings's
 pupils, observes concerning his wise tutelage,
 “ That he always showed a remarkable care
 “ to form them to a catholic temper. He
 “ knew that nurseries of bigots are the devil's
 “ magazines, from which he draws out the
 “ most fatal artillery, to perpetuate the deso-
 “ lations of the church. And no doubt he
 “ had seen, in many instances, that when
 “ young ministers had taken it into their heads
 “ to imagine that a set of human phrases is
 “ *the gospel*, and a particular party of christi-
 “ ans *the church*, their learning and their zeal
 “ will only make them the more formidable
 “ instruments of mischief. — To prevent that
 “ temper of mind in us, which might have
 “ been so pernicious to the world, and would
 “ certainly have been very uneasy to ourselves,
 “ it was his first and his constant care to form
 “ us to a reverence and affection for our
 “ bibles, and to teach us to take our religious
 “ notions from thence, without any regard at
 “ all to human names and authority in expli-
 “ cation of them. You will easily perceive,
 “ that this method would put an immediate
 “ period

" period to a great many disputes, which peo-
 " ple disturb themselves and others with; tho'
 " when they are laid in this balance, they are
 " altogether lighter than vanity." ^b
 " While protestants acknowledge, in words,
 " says an ingenious writer of the present day,
 " that the scriptures are the rule of faith, and
 " alone sufficient to *make men wise unto salva-*
 " *tion*, and every party is well disposed to
 " judge for themselves; they appear extremely
 " jealous of granting the same liberty to one
 " another; and, instead of the scriptures,
 " would slip in their own explications and
 " comments, bind their decisions upon others
 " as an infallible standard, and oblige them
 " to see with *their* eyes. And what is this
 " but popery under another name? It is the
 " worst and most pernicious part of it. — Such
 " have been led to believe through accident;
 " and they can perceive no reason why others
 " should not believe in the same manner.
 " They depend not, therefore, upon argument
 " but authority. If you see with their eyes,
 " it is well; but if you will use your own, you
 " may be fully assured, that the severity of
 " penal laws, if the power shall be unhappily
 " lodged in their hands, will convince you
 " of your obstinacy. Or if they can go no
 " further, they will show *what manner of spirit*
 " *they are of*, by fairly giving you over to the
 " devil,

^b Doddridge's *Manuscript account of his Tutor, Mr. Jen-*
nings's Method of Education. page 84, 85, 114, 115.

“ devil, so far as their interest goes. In vain,
 “ therefore, do these patrons of religious uni-
 “ formity talk of liberty, of conscience, of
 “ reason and argument. They are at bottom
 “ the enemies of conscience and private judg-
 “ ment.”

“ How well, says Dr. *Watts*, hath the blessed
 “ God provided for love and union amongst all
 “ his true worshippers! He hath left them no
 “ just ground to contend and quarrel, or break
 “ themselves into little angry parties, for he
 “ hath now appointed but one religion for them
 “ all, one general method of access to him.
 “ He hath ordained but one Mediator, Jesus
 “ Christ, and hath appointed one Spirit to
 “ draw their hearts near to himself. A glorious
 “ religion indeed, that unites *Jews and Gentiles*;
 “ and mankind of all nations to the great and
 “ blessed God! And what a disgrace is it to
 “ this religion, that we should not be more
 “ united to one another? *We are no more*
 “ *strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with*
 “ *the saints, and of the house-hold of God.* What
 “ a most absurd and grievous thing is it, that
 “ we, who are brought into such a state of
 “ friendship by divine grace, should obey the
 “ corrupt dictates of nature, and the lusts of
 “ the flesh! That we should quarrel and fight,
 “ even in the presence of that God, to whom
 “ we have access by the blood of one Mediator,
 “ and

“ and by the influence of one Spirit! Surely
 “ this must be a Spirit of union, and peace,
 “ and love; this one Spirit which reconciles God
 “ and man, who were at a dreadful distance,
 “ this Spirit which reconciles *Jews* and *Gentiles*,
 “ who were mutual strangers and enemies. And
 “ how can we suppose we are governed by this
 “ uniting Spirit, this Spirit of gentleness, meek-
 “ ness and friendship, if we indulge the fer-
 “ ments of wrath and revenge in our bosom;
 “ if we resolve to carry on strife and conten-
 “ tion, with the language of railing and revil-
 “ ing, against those, who worship the same God
 “ by the same Mediator? How can we hope
 “ that this Spirit hath ever reconciled us to
 “ God, if we persist in enmity against our
 “ brethren? Should we *have all faith*, and
 “ *remove mountains*, if we *have not love*, we are
 “ not christians. The very nature and life of
 “ christianity is *faith working by love*, faith
 “ leading the soul to God through the media-
 “ tion of Jesus Christ his Son, by the aid of
 “ the Holy Spirit, and producing all works of
 “ holiness by the influence of love to God and
 “ man. May this be wrought in our hearts
 “ and practised in the whole course of our
 “ life!”^d

I know, Sir, your hospitable mansion hath of-
 ten entertained such company, whose censures
 of others, and particularly of their reverend
 brethren

^d *Watts's Sermons*, Vol. ii. page 481, 482, 8vo.

brethren, have occasioned not a little pain to your candid mind. In such a case, it would be perfectly consistent with the rules of hospitality and politeness, as well as afford you an unspeakable pleasure, if you could suggest any thing, that might lessen their fondness of their own manner of expressing this doctrine, and at the same time moderate their resentment against those, whose sentiments, or prudence, or tenderness to others oblige them to make use of very different modes of expression. You would thereby, not only promote the true interest of christianity, but most effectually answer, what is, indeed, the principal design of *this letter*. For with no other intention are the sentiments and expressions of ancient and modern writers here ascertained, and their difference from each other placed in such a distinguishing point of view. From these copious materials you may easily collect, while in conversation with your friends, whatever hath a more immediate tendency to lessen their confidence in the propriety of their favourite phraseology. No doubt you will find them dissatisfied with *Dr. Doddridge's propositions*, though he produces such abundant evidence from scripture for them, as, by consulting his book, you will see under their several solutions and demonstrations. On the contrary, I profess the highest esteem for the Doctor's interpretation of scripture, on this subject, as the best I have ever met with. But I most sincerely justify my brethren in their

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attach-

attachment to any different interpretation. I only wish, that we may be perfectly agreed in allowing each other the unlimited exercise of our *christian liberty*, and our *right of private judgment*. You will as undoubtedly hear your zealous friends asserting nothing less than a deity, consisting of three proper distinct persons, independent upon and entirely equal to each other. You may therefore ask them such questions as these. "Is not a *philosophical personality*"
 "your meaning here? If so, is it not unreasonable, unscriptural, and absurd to conceive"
 "of supreme deity, as having three distinct"
 "wills, three distinct self-consciousnesses? Or,"
 "that the same self-consciousness should be"
 "common and mutual to three distinct eternal"
 "spirits? Or, that the same absolute perfections of deity should be communicated"
 "from one philosophical person to another,"
 "and from both to a third, so as each of the"
 "three to retain the whole? On the other"
 "hand, if they mean a *political personality*,"
 "whether it is not as unreasonable and unscriptural to reduce the Son and Spirit to a"
 "mere nominal existence? May we not apply"
 "to all such human schemes, these expressive"
 "but humbling lines of Mr. Baxter, in his"
 "*Poetical Fragments*?

"We croud about a little spark,
 "Learnedly striving in the dark;
 "Never so bold, as when most blind;
 "Run fastest, when the truth's behind.

"On

" On the whole, whether it is not far more
 " eligible to decline the use of language, so
 " utterly insufficient for its intended purpose,
 " so entirely the invention of fallible men,
 " and so much the engine of endless debate,
 " and the source of hatred, separation, and
 " every evil work? Whether it was not the
 " felicity of the *apostolic fathers*, especially of
 " the Apostles themselves, to know nothing
 " of such language? In one word, whether a
 " just value for scripture will not grow, in pro-
 " portion as this fondness for human phrases
 " is diminished? — And may we not hope,
 " that by strictly adhering to scripture, and
 " exalting, as we ought, its honour and in-
 " fluence, we shall not only avoid every un-
 " justifiable extreme in ourselves, but most
 " effectually prevent the opposite extremes of
 " others? Let us but resolve to show, on every
 " proper occasion, our determinate preference
 " of scripture-language to the words of human
 " invention, and our opponents will find them-
 " selves disarmed. Then they will no more
 " venture to tell us, — that our's may be stiled
 " the *Athanasian* heresy; — that we are no bet-
 " ter than polytheists; — that all who worship
 " Christ are idolaters; — that there is no more
 " foundation in the new testament for worship-
 " ing Christ, than the virgin *Mary*; — that
 " Christ is the *Calvinist's* idol; — &c. &c. Such
 " kind of language hath frequently given us
 " much pain, especially when it was heighten-

“ ed, as is too commonly the case, with a spirit
 “ of sneer and ridicule. Were we again to
 “ meet with persons equally dogmatical, it
 “ might well-become us, to *be dumb with si-*
 “ *lence, to hold our peace, even from good, and*
 “ *our sorrow be stirred.* But their deserved
 “ rebuke we may properly leave to an inge-
 “ nious writer, against whom, it is presumed,
 “ they will have no objection. — There are,
 “ says he, not a few pretenders to a liberal
 “ spirit, who make their own opinions the
 “ utmost boundary of free enquiry, and are
 “ no less severe in their censures of those, who
 “ venture one step beyond their line, than the
 “ most rigid supporters of ancient systems.”*

If you succeed, Sir, in this first effort, and
 have the pleasure to observe your company less
 attached to words without proper meaning,
 you will more chearfully proceed to some far-
 ther enquiries, such as these. “ Why should
 “ not unscriptural speculations be as tolerable
 “ in others, as in ourselves? Have they not
 “ the same right to exercise the faculty of
 “ imagination and invention, as we have? Is
 “ not fallibility as inseparable from our cha-
 “ racter, as from theirs? If our indefensible
 “ expressions on this subject have been con-
 “ sistent with our retaining the essential truths
 “ of the gospel, and the piety of real christi-
 “ ans, why should it not be equally so with
 “ theirs? Do they not profess the same value
 “ for scripture, as the only infallible standard
 “ of

* *Enfield's Biographical Sermons.* page 232.

“ of faith and practice? Have they not the
 “ same right to interpret scripture for them-
 “ selves? Are there not in their writings the
 “ evidences of learning and modesty? Are
 “ not their lives blameless, exemplary and
 “ useful? In all these respects do they not
 “ justly claim our esteem? And when we
 “ have this esteem for them, does it not
 “ contribute to the repose of our minds; as
 “ there is nothing more subversive of self-
 “ enjoyment, than bigotted and unfriendly
 “ thoughts of others?—In urging this friendly
 “ temper towards them, may I not very pro-
 “ perly remind you of the pious Mr. *Haly-*
 “ *burton*, who, you know, was one of the most
 “ orthodox divines of the *Church of Scotland*?
 “ Was it not in the nearest views of eternity,
 “ that he said?—I leave this one advice more
 “ to my family, that whereas we have a pro-
 “ spect of divided times and different appre-
 “ hensions and practices amongst ministers and
 “ people; beware of interesting yourselves in
 “ those differences, or entertaining prejudices
 “ against ministers upon the one hand or the
 “ other. There will be faithful ministers on
 “ both sides, and on either hand they will act,
 “ according to their light, sincerely. Who-
 “ ever shall weaken any of their hands, will
 “ find no peace in it at the close of the day.
 “ I love their persons that differ from me, and
 “ I value what I see of God in them. But I
 “ am to call no man master but Christ.^f — But

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“ there

^f *Halyburton's Life*. page 180, 194-

“ there are other inducements to our esteem
 “ for them, that are of a nature still more in-
 “ teresting and important. Are they not per-
 “ fectly agreed with us in acknowledging *one*
 “ *God, and one Mediator between God and man,*
 “ *the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom*
 “ *for all, and through whom we all have an access*
 “ *by one spirit unto the Father?* Is not such a-
 “ greement an infinitely stronger bond of union,
 “ than any mode of mere human speculation or
 “ expression? *What doth hinder us then from*
 “ *cultivating friendship with them?* and you,
 “ gentlemen, in particular, from *giving them*
 “ *the right hand of fellowship* in every ministerial
 “ function? Or rather, why does not love to
 “ Christ and his members, and zeal for the
 “ honour and interest of our common christi-
 “ anity, oblige us to maintain christian com-
 “ munion with them, on every occasion, and
 “ without the least interruption? Which of us
 “ is not all attention to the apostle, when he
 “ says, *Receive them, but not to doubtful disputa-*
 “ *tions. Let us therefore follow after the things*
 “ *which make for peace, and things wherewith*
 “ *one may edify another?*— Do we not heartily
 “ concur with Mr. Baxter, when he wished,
 “ that GOD’s own word were taken for the
 “ sufficient terms of our consent and concord,
 “ in order to union and communion? — And
 “ shall we not as heartily conclude, with Mr.
 “ Howe, in wishing these things might be
 “ con-

“ considered and discoursed with *less confidence*
 “ and *peremptory determination*, with a greater
 “ awe of what is divine and sacred, and that
 “ we may more *confine ourselves to the plain*
 “ *words of scripture* in this matter, and be
 “ content therewith.” ^h

While you are suggesting to your guests such persuasions to caution and candour, I doubt not, Sir, but they will admire your discernment and benevolence. They will feel their social hours pass away with pleasure and profit well mingled. When they depart, it will be with a full conviction, that your enquires were by no means intended for personal victory, but were solely calculated for the nobler purpose of exchanging the prejudices of education and rash censures of others, for solid wisdom and brotherly love.

Desirable as it is, that such wisdom and candour may have their proper influence in all our social interviews, it is not less so, to have the same salutary influence extended to public sermons and prayers. It cannot but be painful to every discerning and pious mind, to hear a minister in the pulpit; perhaps in all the heat and inexperience of youth; and much more if his years are sufficient to have meliorated his temper, and improved his knowledge; yet expressing himself without the least intimation of self-diffidence, and with the most severe censures upon others; though the subject itself

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hath

hath puzzled the most learned, sagacious and pious minds through successive ages, and they have entertained such widely different sentiments concerning it. It is painful to observe, with what solemn confidence those peculiar phrases are uttered in a worshipping assembly, which men have invented, to show themselves *wise above what is written*, and concerning the meaning and tendency of which, if the speaker was properly interrogated, he would soon find himself involved in the greatest perplexities. In all probability he would be obliged to reflect upon himself with conscious shame, for not *understanding, either what he said, or whereof he affirmed*. On the contrary, he would find no expedient so effectual, in order to restore and maintain the peace of his mind, or secure his reputation and usefulness, as both in prayer and preaching to express himself, as much as possible, in such terms as will avoid giving offence, and tend to edify true christians of all sentiments and denominations. Or rather, according to the excellent advice of *Paul to Titus, in doctrine*, as well as in prayer, *showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you*. Would to God, that young ministers attended to this apostolic advice, when they are drawing up their confessions of faith, preparatory to their ordination! And that all those ministers, who assist on such occasions,

as

as well as other persons who attend them, would be ambitious of conforming to it themselves, and take complacency in them that do! *But if any be otherwise minded, doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, and perverse disputings, let us either possess ourselves in silence, or by the meekness of wisdom endeavour to bring good out of evil.*

Considering what plain directions and numerous examples we have in scripture, concerning prayer, it is strange that such gross deviations from them should have so much prevailed in the manner of conducting that interesting part of public worship. It was with an immediate reference to the language of public prayer, and well-consistent with his great reforming work, that *Luther* said, "The word, Trinity, sounds " oddly, and is a human invention; it were " better to call Almighty God, God, than " Trinity."¹ *Calvin* more explicitly extended his remarks, both to prayer and preaching. " However, says he, some may pour out their " virulent language against this faith, [that is, " concerning the Trinity] it will be safe for " us never to deviate from it. We shall there- " by secure to ourselves the additional advan- " tages, of avoiding many thorny questions, " and of exploding those modes of expression, " which are as rude and ungrammatical, as " they

¹ *Mart. Lutheri Postilla in Evangel. Dominic. Ben Mor-decai's Letters. No. 1. page 75.*

“ they are utterly unscriptural. I will instance
 “ in that usual but vulgar prayer, *O Holy*
 “ *Trinity, thou one God, have mercy on us.* It
 “ displeases me, as it is nothing else but a
 “ senseless barbarism. Instead therefore, of
 “ disputing about things of a trifling and su-
 “ perfluous nature, I only wish you to abide
 “ by what I have said, That there are three
 “ persons in one essence.” He immediately
 goes on to observe, how much he was also
 offended with the crudities, too commonly
 made use of, not only in prayer, but in the
 manner of interpreting scripture. “ I must,
 “ says he, consider their talk as vain babbling,
 “ who attempt, by their comments, to darken
 “ that pure and genuine doctrine of piety,
 “ which hath nothing in it of singularity.
 “ They assert, for instance, — that *one God and*
 “ *one Mediator*, is the Trinity; — that to *know*
 “ *thee the one God*, must mean the Trinity; —
 “ that *ye believe in God*, is ye believe in the
 “ Trinity; or, — that *whatsoever ye ask of the*
 “ *Father*, ye ask of the Trinity. Such inter-
 “ pretations, let us reject, not merely because
 “ they are insipid and injudicious, but because
 “ they are prophane.” *

The

* Quicquid blaterent virulentæ linguæ, in hac fide
 [scil. de Trinitate] acquiescere semper tutum erit: sicuti
 utile quoque spinosis multis questionibus ansam præcidere,
 simulque supersedere a formulis loquendi vel nimium as-
 peris, vel scripturæ usu remotis. Precatio vulgo trita est,

sancta

The leading design of *Calvin*, in his addresses to the *Protestants* in *Poland*, and particularly in the letter from whence the above passages are taken, was to caution them, both against *tritheism* in sentiment, and against a *tritheistic* manner of expression. His making use of such strong terms of disapprobation as *barbarous*, *insipid*, and *prophane*; would be sure to offend the *Papists*, who are so very fond of a *tritheistic* Trinity. Accordingly we find him severely censured by the *Jesuits*, as *heretical* in the doctrine of the Trinity, and apparently for no other reason but because he was not a *Tri-theist*, in which view he properly comes under the denomination of an *Unitarian*.

The

sancta Trinitas, unus Deus, miserere nostri. Mihi non placet, ac omnino barbariem sapit. Nolim igitur vos de rebus supervacuis litigare, modo illibatum maneat quod dixi de tribus in una essentia personis. — Quid blateret *Stancarus*, nihil moror, nec vero æquum est, puram et genuinam pietatis doctrinam, cui nihil affine habet, ejus commentis obscurari: quod ergo ab eo dicitur, *unus Deus et unus Mediator*, id est Trinitas: item, *ut cognoscant te unum Deum*, id est Trinitatem: *creditis in Deum*, id est Trinitatem: *quicquid petieritis a patre*, id est a Trinitate: non modo tanquam insipidum, sed profanum quoque repudiamus.

Calvini Opuscula. page 1972, 1973. Edit. *Genev.* 1566.

—— *Trac. Theol.* Vol. 1. page 946. Edit. *Genev.* 1576.

—— *Opera*, Tom. 7. page 686, 687. Ed. *Genev.* 1617.

—— *Epist. ad Polonos.* Vol. 8. page 591. Edit. *Amst.* 1667. *Curcellæi Opera.* page 833.

Scott's Essay towards a demonstration of the scripture Trinity.

Pref. page 9.

The pretended errors of *Calvin*, in almost every point of divinity, were collected by *James Gualter*, a Jesuit; and *this*, relating to the Trinity, as it stands in that collection, is the *twenty fourth*. In quoting the above passage from *Calvin's* works, the Jesuit gives *Calvin's* words in such an unfair manner, as hath ever been too common, both among Papists and Protestants. The Jesuit's words are these. "It is *Calvin's* twenty fourth error, " that we are not to pray to the most Holy " Trinity. This we have in his *Letter to the* " *Poles*, where he says, that Prayer so com- " monly made use of, *O Holy Trinity, thou one* " *God, have mercy on us*, displeases me, as in " plain terms, it stinks of its own barbarism. " — He even calls their faith, stupid, foolish, " and prophane, who imagine, that to believe " in God, is to believe in the Trinity."¹

Another eminent Jesuit would also be thought to entertain suspicions of *Calvin's* orthodoxy, on this head, as appears by the following remark

¹ Viceffimus quartus [error scil.] sanctissimam Trinitatem non esse invocandam. Hæc precatio (ait *Calvinus* in sua *Epistola ad Polonos*) communiter recepta, *Sancta Trinitas, unus Deus, miserere nobis*, mihi non placet, ac plane suam barbariem redolet. — Et non multo post. — Stolidam, fatuam ac profanam vocat eorum fidem, qui sentiunt credere in Deum esse credere in Trinitatem. *Tabula Chronographica Status Ecclesiæ Catholicæ. Nec non veterum errorum cum recentioribus Calvinianæ Sæcæ Hæresibus collatio. Autore Jacobo Gualterio, Societatis Jesu.* page 773. Lug. [Galliæ] 1614.

mark of Mr. Charnock, [in his *Sermon on Mark x. 18.*] "Others say, [vid. *Calvin* in locum] "that Christ had no intention to draw *the ruler* "to an acknowledgment of his deity, but only "to assert his divine authority, or mission from "God. For which interpretation *Maldonat* "calls *Calvin* an Arianizer. He doth not here "assert the essence of his deity, but the authority of his doctrine."^m

Solicitude to make every text speak the language of some favourite hypothesis, however contrary to the spirit of the context, is not peculiar to Jesuits. But we may here observe, how artfully *Calvin* is represented, as totally rejecting the word, Trinity, only because he points out to his readers the gross abuse of it; and how this general proposition, *to believe in God*, is substituted for our Lord's particular command, *ye believe in God*, to which he immediately adds, *believe also in me*, thereby limiting the former to his father. Desirous as *Gualter* was to pervert *Calvin's* meaning, it seems he could not practise his art with equal plausibility on the other scriptures mentioned by *Calvin*. It affords however, an additional proof of the authenticity of the passage now extracted from *Calvin's* works.

With such a similar tendency to reformation, as that we have now traced in *Luther* and *Calvin*, it is observed by Mr. *Robinson*, [in his *Plea for the Divinity of Christ*, 1st Ed.] "That "the

^m *Charnock's Works*, Vol 1. page 575.

“ the *creed*, which is called *Athanasius's*, we
 “ neither understand, nor can we conceive
 “ how the repetition of it can be thought an
 “ act of divine worship, acceptable to God ;
 “ and its damnatory clauses we utterly abhor.
 “ We do not propose distinct addresses in
 “ prayer to God the Father, God the Son,
 “ and God the Holy Ghost, as the *established*
 “ *Litany* does. God is one undivided essence,
 “ and to him, the one God, is our worship
 “ addressed, thro’ the Mediator Jesus Christ.”

Thus far Mr. *Robinson* agrees with what we
 have already seen in Mr. *Benjamin Bennet* ; viz.
 “ That our chief concern with the Son of
 “ God, is as Mediator.” And with the fol-
 lowing definition of Mr. *Simon Browne*. “ Wor-
 “ ship, in general, says he, is nothing else but
 “ inward respect to a superior being, in pro-
 “ portion to its known excellencies, rank,
 “ state, power, &c. expressed by proper ex-
 “ ternal signs.” According to this definition,
 Mr. *Browne* goes on to argue, “ that if this
 “ worship be done out of obedience to a
 “ divine command, God is directly honoured
 “ and worshipped therein. That by such wor-
 “ ship the natural obligation of the *first* com-
 “ mand is not destroyed. That we are bound
 “ to worship Christ as Mediator ; as for in-
 “ stance, — by saving faith in him, — baptism
 “ into his name, — remembrance of him in
 “ his supper, — and by praying to the Father
 “ through the Son, — That this homage paid
 “ to

" to the Mediator, is even to his humanity, as
 " that is necessary to his mediatorship. That
 " all in Christ, bearing the office of Mediator,
 " must be worshipped, when he is. And that
 " his being God, may be a motive, that is, a
 " foundation, for our firmer trust in him; but
 " the formal reason for our trusting in him as
 " Mediator, must be, that he is Mediator, and
 " constituted such by God." ^a Mr. *Browne's*
 definition, and his inferences from it, are but
 the sentiments of Dr. *Owen* and Mr. *Baxter*.
 The former says, " The command of God is
 " the ground and reason of all religious wor-
 " ship. The angels are to worship the Lord
 " Christ the Mediator, and the ground of their
 " so doing is God's command. He saith, *Wor-*
 " *ship him all ye angels.*" ^o The latter declares,
 " Had God bid me pray to angels, I would
 " not have refused it, but have taken it for my
 " honour." ^p

It may be just, but it is not the less painful
 for me, to observe, that Mr. *Robinson* neither
 agrees with Mr. *Bennet* concerning the Mediator,
 nor with Mr. *Browne* concerning mediatorial
 worship, nor with what is just now quoted from
 his *plea for the divinity of Christ*, when he after-
 wards

^a *Browne's* sober and charitable disquisition concerning
 the importance of the Trinity. He was author of a *Hymn*
Book, and of an excellent *Answer to Christianity as old as*
the Creation.

^o *Owen on Heb.* Vol. i. page 98.

^p *Baxter's Practical Works.* Vol. iii. page 894.

wards says in the same excellent *plea*, “ Do
 “ christians worship Jesus Christ? We do not
 “ worship the man Jesus, but we do worship
 “ the God, who dwells in the man, for *in him*
 “ *dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily.*”

As for Mr. Bennet and Mr. Browne, if the weight of their authority could receive any addition from men as fallible as themselves, they had long before the concurrence of the *assembly of divines at Westminster*, whose *confession of faith* says, “ That prayer may be acceptable to God,
 “ it is to be made in the name of the Son.” In their *larger catechism* they more expressly teach,
 “ That prayer is to be made to God alone, and
 “ to none other; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for, the glorious work of Mediator, but Christ alone, we
 “ are to pray in no other name but his only.” And in their *shorter catechism* they give this definition; viz. “ Prayer is the offering up of our
 “ desires to God for things agreeable to his will
 “ in the name of Christ.” — Perhaps no one more exactly agreed in judgment with the *assembly of divines* than Dr. Thomas Manton, and particularly in what he says on this head. “ Then
 “ do we honour the Trinity in unity, not when
 “ we conceive of the mystery, but when we
 “ make a religious use of this high advantage,
 “ to come to God, in the name of Christ, by the
 “ Spirit, and look for all from God in Christ
 “ thro’ the Holy Ghost. Direct your prayers
 “ to God the Father; Christ prayed to the Father,
 “ ther,

“ ther, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven*
 “ *and earth*; so the saints in their addressees. For
 “ *this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our*
 “ *Lord Jesus Christ.* (Pray) in the name of
 “ Christ, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that*
 “ *will I do.* (Pray) by the Spirit, *Praying in the*
 “ *Holy Ghost—Likewise the Spirit itself also help-*
 “ *eth our infirmities—because he maketh interces-*
 “ *sion for the saints according to the will of God.*
 “ Christians need not puzzle themselves about
 “ conceiving of Three in One, and One in
 “ Three; but let them in this manner come to
 “ God, and it sufficeth; make God the object,
 “ and Christ the means of access, and look for
 “ help from the Spirit.”¹

Thus while public sermons, and prayers, are
 conducted with a scriptural wisdom and can-
 dour, they will carry a forcible conviction to
 every intelligent hearer, that what is spoken hath
 a salutary tendency, and the more so, as it ap-
 pears to be delivered with a right temper of
 mind. “ Our humility, says Dr. *Leechman*,
 “ ought to appear in the manner in which we
 “ hold and deliver our sentiments and opinions.
 “ There is a pulpit-modesty, which is very
 “ beautiful and engaging; as there is a pulpit-
 “ pride, extremely disagreeable and disgusting.
 “ Nothing can make a more odious appearance
 “ than pride preaching up humility, and a man
 “ describing himself as exceeding little, when it
 “ plainly appears, he hath an idea of himself as

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“ exceed-

¹ *Manton's Works*, Vol. 3. p. 272. Fol.

“ exceeding great. In order to preserve a pro-
 “ per modesty as to our notions and sentiments
 “ about things of doubtful disputation, and the
 “ circumstantial of religion, and to abate that
 “ positiveness in our own way, which is so op-
 “ posite to real humility, and which leads us
 “ to complain of the pride of other men’s un-
 “ derstanding, when there is no other reason for
 “ the charge, than that they cannot adopt our
 “ notions or phrases : let us seriously ask our-
 “ selves the following questions. Can I pre-
 “ tend to a clearer understanding, to a more di-
 “ ligent and impartial enquiry into revelation,
 “ or to greater degrees of divine illumination,
 “ than all those who differ in opinion from me ?
 “ What grounds have I to imagine, that I am in
 “ the full possession of all divine truth ? Do I
 “ not acknowledge, that I may err ? What se-
 “ curity then have I, that I do not actually err,
 “ in some instances, amidst the multitude of
 “ opinions which I hold ? May I not be in a
 “ mistake, nay in many mistakes, though I am
 “ not conscious of the particular instances ? Is
 “ there not ground to expect, that the admission
 “ into the regions of perfect light will prove,
 “ not only an enlargement, but a correction of
 “ former views, to men of the wisest, best and
 “ fairest minds ? Such questions seriously put
 “ and urged upon our own consciences, in si-
 “ lence and retirement, and under the awful
 “ impression of the presence of the great searcher
 “ of hearts, would naturally check that pre-
 sumptuous

" sumptuous confidence, that our own particu-
 " lar views are right, which is so common in the
 " world, and so frequently accompanied with
 " that *wrath of man*, which *never worketh the*
 " *righteousness of God*. Such serious soliloquies
 " would lead us to suspect, that we are depart-
 " ing from the meekness and humility of the
 " gospel spirit, when we allow ourselves to think
 " and to speak hardly of others, because they
 " do not see every thing just in the same light
 " with us, or have not freedom to express them-
 " selves in our phrases; which are perhaps not
 " only unscriptural, but were unknown in the
 " christian church for many centuries, and can
 " claim no better, nor higher original, than the
 " dregs of the scholastic philosophy. There
 " may be phrases, not strictly scriptural, which
 " must be acknowledged to be venerable by
 " their hoary antiquity. But even these ought
 " not to be too much urged upon honest and
 " tender minds."

Here, Sir, permit me to mention those objec-
 tions, to the *first edition* of *this letter*, with which
 several divines have honoured me, and to some
 of which you will probably think it a sufficient
 answer only to state them.

Because the word, Trinity, is represented as
 unknown to the *apostolic fathers*, and the abuse
 of it as displeasing to *Luther* and *Calvin*, I am
 therefore accused of attempting wholly to ex-
 plode the word itself. On the contrary, I not

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only

* *Leechman's Wisdom of God in the gospel revelation.* page
 53—56.

only allow it to be innocent, but naturally to express any unity or agreement between three persons or things. "A Trinity, says Archbishop *Tillotson*, is nothing but three of any thing. So a Trinity of persons is no more than three persons." But I beg leave to ask, whether this word be useful or innocent in a prayer, as it tends to hide from multitudes, the infinitely important and the only way of obtaining divine forgiveness and acceptance, even our coming to GOD for mercy through his Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit?

When I endeavour to prove the incompetency of any phrases, fully to express a sublime doctrine of pure revelation, I am accused of a design to represent the doctrine itself as of little importance, and even to advance principles that lead to universal scepticism. Accusations, so formidable in their appearance, but in reality so inoffensive in their direction, can only arise from an immoderate esteem for *human creeds*, and particularly the *Athanasian* as if equal to scripture. Why is not Dr. *Waterland* himself as much accused? Does not that champion for *Athanasianism* allow, that this *creed* was never written by *Athanasius*, who died about the year 371. The Dr. conjectures, that *Hilary*, Bishop of *Arles*, composed it about 430. Perhaps with as little certainty Dr. *Cave* ascribes it to *Vigilius Tapsensis* about 484, but seems on better authority to add, that it was first spoken of by *Theodulphus Aurelianensis* about 821, and that it did not obtain in the churches before the year 1000,
nor

nor was generally in use till 1233. " Indeed,
 " says Bishop *Burnet*, no such creed was ever
 " known in the world before the *eighth cen-*
 " *tury*, and then it was given out as the *creed* of
 " *Athanasius*, and so it grew to be received by
 " the *Western Church*, perhaps the more early
 " because it went under so great a name."

It is urged, as a *parallel case*, that the doctrine of divine omnipresence is no more capable of particular explanation than this of the Trinity. But the learned and ingenious objector will be pleased to consider, that the former is a truth of natural religion, while the latter absolutely depends on revelation; in which view the cases are far from being parallel. It is indeed granted, that both the doctrines, as far as relates to any merely human mode of explaining them, are equally superior to the adequate conception or expression of mortals.

When the same learned and ingenious gentleman ascribes *to art, rather than to candour*, those definitions of terms, by which I have endeavoured to ascertain the sense of human phrases; I hope he will allow, that candour is not less to be valued for endeavouring to speak intelligibly and with precision. Does not that fiery zeal, which kindles flames of controversy in the

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churches,

* *Waterland's Critical History of the Athanasian Creed.*
 Chap. 7, 8.

Wilton's Review of the Articles. page 79, 80.

Cave's Scrip. Eccles. Historia. p. 143, 146, 370, 371, 501.

Burnet's Exposition of the Articles. Art. viii. p. 106.
 4th Edit. 1720.

Life of Chillingworth. page 79, 80.

Craddock's Supplement to Knowledge and Practice. p. 1.

churches, usually arise, in a great measure, from talking without ideas, and uttering sounds without sense? Hath not such zeal too often been more bent upon magnifying the importance of the unscriptural and unintelligible phrases of fathers and schoolmen, than upon enforcing the grand and incontrovertible principles of christianity, and recommending the spirit and precepts of the gospel to the practical regard of its hearers?

It would be endless, and might seem invidious, to point out the writers, who have not always defined their terms, and thereby have cherished, though very undesignedly, that in their readers, which is most opposite to candour. Permit me, Sir, only to mention three celebrated foreigners. — While *Calvin* wisely cautioned against philosophizing on the *substance* of God, and also against imagining there are *three* Gods; it is to be wished he had explained his idea of *three persons in one essence*. — His excellent countryman, *Saurin*, in a *sermon on the divinity of Christ*, for want of defining the terms he there uses, deprives us of the usual pleasure resulting from a writer, whom we so justly admire for his penetration and perspicuity. — A third eminent author of the same nation is *Abbadie*, who, in a *treatise on the divinity of Christ*, by leaving his terms undefined, is led to this precarious manner of arguing; “that if his representation of the subject is not just, then
“ Christ is an impostor, worse than *Mahomet*,
“ and

“and deserved the punishment he suffered.” By a like medium of argument, the opponents of *Abbadie* might have said, “if our sentiments are not true, then the scripture is not inspired, and the writers of it are impostors.” Were we so happy as to be always accurate in defining our terms, there would be less danger of our having recourse to arguments, that prove nothing; or, of giving such representations, as are calculated, rather to inflame, than to enlighten; or, of seeming to favour those names of obloquy, which a blind, rather than a malevolent zeal, is so industrious to propagate. Indeed, accurate definition is one grand expedient for distinguishing truth from error, or what is *scriptural* from what is merely *human*.¹

Though Dr. *Manton* makes no attempt to define the meaning of “three in one, and one in three;” yet he gives us a rich equivalent, by expressly advising “christians not to puzzle themselves about it.” This was advice no less proper to illustrate his subject. (*He that cometh to God, must believe that he is*) than to edify such christians, who, being but little acquainted with controversy, are most of all solicitous about their own improvement in a divine life and temper. It is pity, as the Doctor well suggests, that such persons should

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have

¹ *Saurin's Sermons*, Vol. 3. page 103—134. translated by Mr. Robinson of Cambridge.

Abbadie's Treatise on the Divinity of Christ. passim.
A Translation is republished by Mr. *Abraham Booth*.

have their peace of mind interrupted, when drawing nigh to God in religious worship, by needlessly puzzling themselves, *above what is written*, concerning the object of their worship. It is pity their apprehensions of their fellow-worshippers should in the least deviate from *brotherly kindness and charity*, only because they fancy it necessary that there should be an exact agreement in some unscriptural niceties. For composing such pious minds, the Doctor's advice is most excellent. And with no other view but to second his endeavours, let me entreat you, Sir, to recollect how we have defined *philosophical* and *political personality*, together with the distinction between the peculiar sentiments of *Tritheists*, *Modalists* and *Unitarians*. All of them perfectly agree in this, that the person, who was born of the virgin *Mary*, and who died on the cross, was in reality a man, and that the supreme God was not born, neither died. All *Tritheists* and *Modalists*, together with multitudes of *Unitarians*, are also agreed, that there is an intimate union, between the supreme God, and the person who was born of the virgin, and who died on the cross, but that the nature of this union is, in the present state, inexplicable. You will now ask, Sir, wherein they differ? To this I answer, that those *Unitarians*, to whom I have been referring, suppose there is but one person in the Godhead, and that the man Christ Jesus is united to that one person. On the

the other, hand all the *Tritheists* maintain, that there are three persons in the Godhead, and that the man Christ Jesus is united to the second person of the three. As for the *Modalists*, they all agree with such *Unitarians* in idea, and with the *Tritheists* in language. From this remarkable difference between them, not merely candour, but truth and justice oblige us to draw the following obvious conclusions. They all conceive of the man Christ Jesus as intimately united to supreme divinity. — They all design to ascribe to him the highest honour. — Those that ascribe to him an union to the whole Godhead, cannot be justly supposed to do him less honour, than others who only ascribe to him an union with the second person in the Godhead. — However their ascriptions of the highest honour may seem to differ, the real honour of Christ must still be the same in itself, and their sincere design will be equally entitled to his favourable regard. — Their different ascriptions cannot possibly make any difference in Christ's power or willingness to save them, as long as they sincerely love and unreservedly obey him. — Nor can their different ascriptions necessarily affect the truth and glory of christianity, nor the present edification and comfort, much less the future happiness of real christians. — But if they censure and condemn one another, merely on account of such different ascriptions, it may too properly be said, that *they know not what spirit*
they

they are of. — On the contrary, they may, in a perfect consistence with their different apprehensions and ascriptions, agree together *all of them to speak the same thing*, even in prayer and preaching, and by doing so, they will *roll away the reproaches*, which their mutual and violent contentions on this subject, have too generally brought upon their christian profession, and will most effectually promote the edification of the churches, and the peace of their own minds.

On the whole, whatever disagreement there hath been, or may continue to be, in the manner of conception or expression concerning the *divine nature*, it is happy for us, that there is little or none concerning *divine love*. Loving God is the life of religion. Therefore our blessed Lord, who is himself the grand medium of religion, asked *Peter*, and with him every christian, and every christian minister, *Lovest thou me?* Nothing could be more easy and intelligible in itself, or more important and interesting to all his followers. But that his ministers might, at once, discern the sincerity of their own love to him, and be excited to *fulfil their ministry* for him, he added, *Feed my sheep, feed my lambs*. Thus they are directed to the best expedient for accomplishing the best work in the world; that is, by love to Christ to draw multitudes to love him. Their sincerely attempting this, and much more their succeeding in it, is of infinitely greater impor-

importance, and will be infinitely more for their honour and happiness, than disputing about the doctrine of the Trinity, or gaining over others to what they may imagine the most rational and scriptural ideas or language concerning it. Your partiality, Sir, in my favour, will easily credit me, (and O may *my witness be in heaven, and my record on high!*) that in this one point are centered the unwearied labours and fervent prayers of

Your's, &c.

Kidderminster,
Jan. 20, 1777.

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